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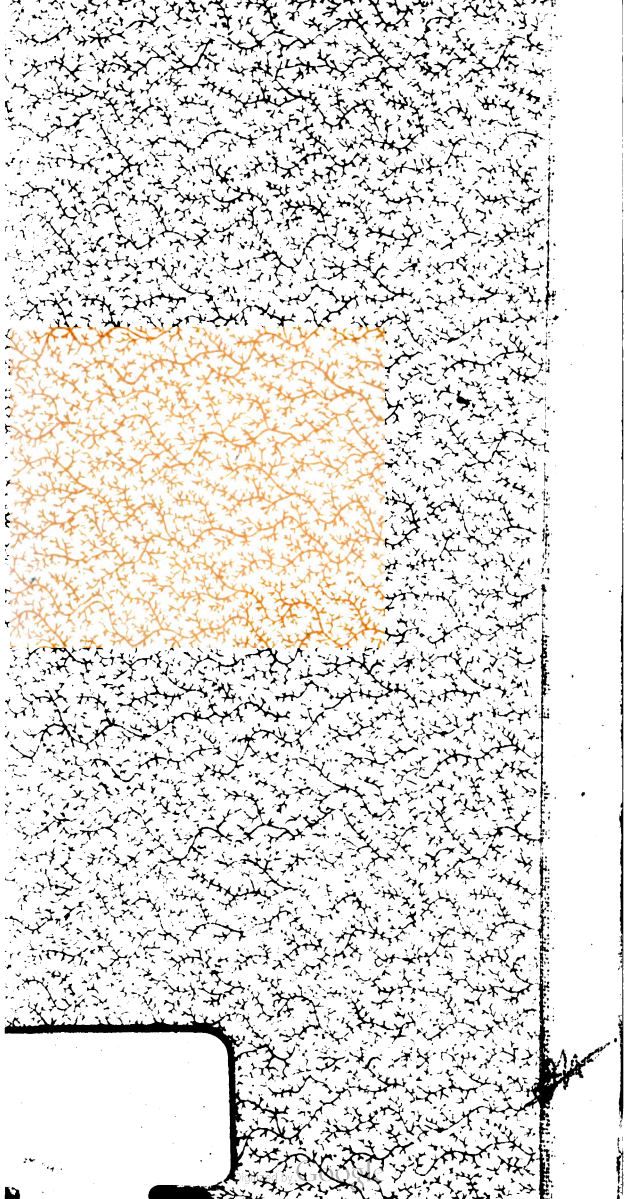
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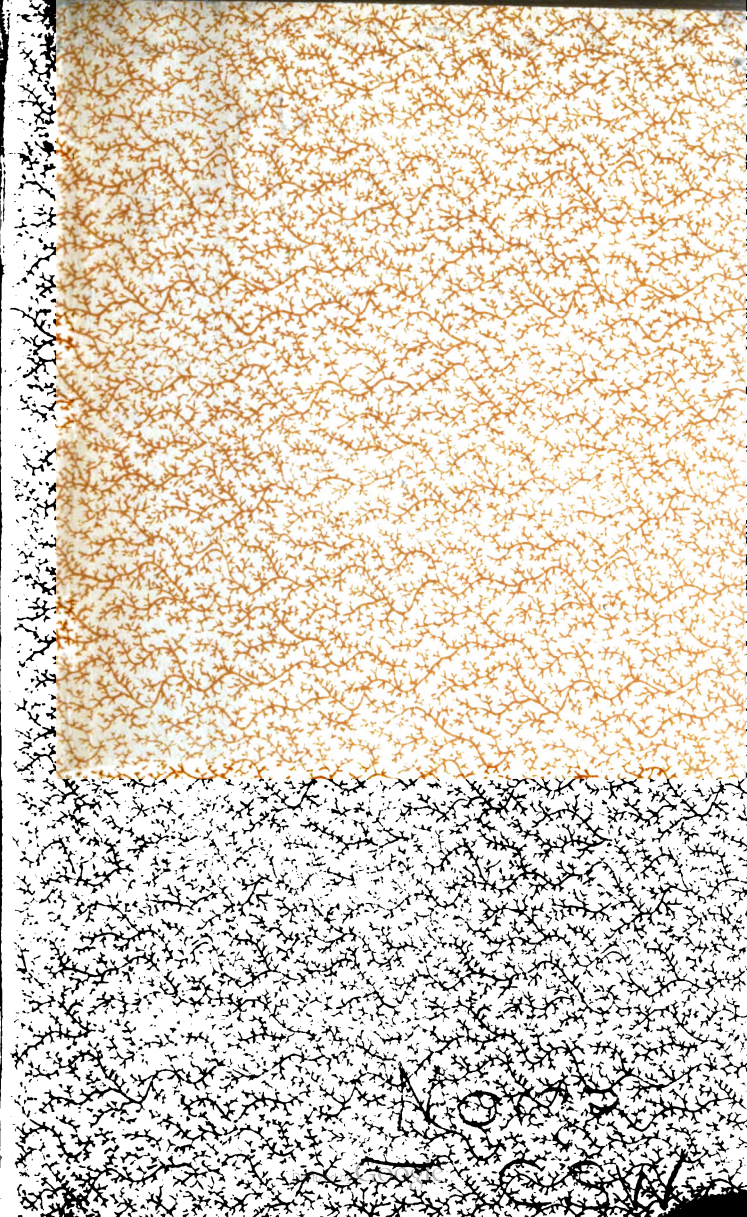


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PATRIOTIC
SKETCHES
OF
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WRITTEN IN CONNAUGHT.

.....
BY MISS OWENSON. *Lady M.*
.....

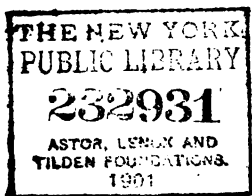
TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

BALTIMORE:

PRINTED FOR GEO. DOBBIN & MURPHY, AND
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Geo. Dobbin & Murphy, printers.
1809.

ROY W. B.
JUN
1901



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE publishers of Miss Owenson's Patriotic Sketches would remark, that the price of the English copy of this work is *four dollars*. They flatter themselves, it will be a source of pleasure to local readers to learn, that the *type* was cast expressly for this volume at the *Baltimore Foundry*, owned by *Samuel Sower & Co.*—the *paper* manufactured by *Conrad, Lucas & Co.*—and the relative excellence of each has not often been surpassed by any publications which have been issued from the American press.

Miss Owenson has been long celebrated, as an eminent proof of the vast extent of the powers of the imagination; and her ardent attachment to the “*Emerald Isle*,” elicits patriotic fire in every page of her writings, when the “*green fields of Erin*” are the subject. They

ADVERTISEMENT.

who have read and admired the *Wild Irish Girl*, will recognise in the *Patriotic Sketches* the same pen, animated by a similar spirit; and the last effusion of her mind will be perused with the strongest emotions of sympathy and philanthropy, by all those who weep over the degradation, or rejoice in the melioration of the condition of man.

Baltimore, June 2d, 1809.

PREFACE.

.....

IN that happy age when the first gloss of nature is fresh on every sense, when infant attention hangs eagerly on the tale of fanciful tradition, when the heart trembles to the pathetic, and the imagination revels in the marvellous ; it was my destiny to have the first warmed into feeling—the other, first kindled into ardour, by the pensive legend of national woe, or the romantic tale of national heroism.

To have caught from the paternal lip, the transmitted “ song of other times,” breathed in the native strains of my native country, and emulous of the lay which engrafted on the simple sensations of childhood the glowing sensibilities of maturer life, early to have learnt to lisp its echo, and to awaken the first tones of my infant lyre to the inspirations of national enthusiasm.

In a more advanced period of existence, I became the resident of those scenes sacred to the airy images of my childhood's wonder; from whence tradition still sends forth her tale of interest; and where to the heated fancy, the *genius of Ireland* seems to droop over her silenced harp, and at intervals to snatch from its tremulous chords, a strain, which like the music of her own bards is "sweet, though mournful to the soul."

Here revelling in the ever ready *cead mile faltra* of milisian cordiality, the frequent visitant of the peasant's hut, the sometimes guest of the chieftain's mansion, my heart in its general intercourse, thus touched on the two extremes of Irish wretchedness and Irish comfort. While in the genuine aspect of the national character, whether viewed in the rough-hewn traits of unmodified illiteracy, or the polished features of educated refinement, my mind still found a sanction for that national partiality, which if not an intuitive principle, at least, formed the first of its imbibed ideas.

It was requisite therefore I should leave my native country to learn the turpitude, degradation, ferocity and inconsequence of her offspring ; the miseries of her present, and the falsity of the recorded splendours of her ancient state.— This ungracious information I acquired during a short tour through a sister isle ; and it was in the course of one of the many conversations which occurred on the subject of my always termed, “ unhappy country,” that a hint casually suggested, formed the origin of a little work, which has since appeared under the title of the “ *Wild Irish Girl*.”

Yet I came to the self-devoted task, with a diffidence proportioned to the ardour which instigated me to the attempt ; for as a *woman*, a *young woman*, and an *Irish woman* ; I felt all the delicacy of undertaking a work which had for the professed theme of its discussion, circumstances of national import, and national interest.

But though I meant not to appear on the list of opposition as a fairy amazon, arm-

ed with a pebble and a sling, against a host of gigantic prejudices: although to compose a national defence, to ward the shaft of opprobrium hurled at the character of my country, to extenuate the effects or expose the cause of its popular discontents, was as incompatible with my sex and years, as with my trivial talent, and limited powers ; yet I was still aware that in the historic page, recent details, and existing circumstances of Irish story, lived many a record of Irish virtue, Irish genius, and Irish heroism, which the simplicity of truth alone was sufficient to delineate ; many a tale of pathos which woman's heart could warmest feel, and truest tell, and many a trait of romantic colouring and chivalrous refinement, which woman's fancy fondest contemplates and best depicts.

Still however in that era of life, when the faculties of the mind abandon themselves to the wild impulse of imagination, or fondly hover round the local territories of the heart, I found it difficult and uninteresting to confine myself to a

mere relation of facts; and in preference to a cold detail of "flat realities," determined on the composition of a national novel, spun from those materials which the ancient and modern history, manners, and habits of my country supplied; and while fiction wove her airy web, to draw the brightest tints of her variegated tissue from the deathless colouring of truth.

To blend the imaginary though probable incident with the interesting fact, to authenticate the questioned refinement of ancient habits, by the testimony of living modes, faithfully to delineate what I had intimately observed, and to found my opinions on that medium which ever vibrates between the partial delineation of national prejudice, on one side, and the exaggerated details of foreign antipathy on the other; such was the prospectus my wishes dared to draw, if I failed in their accomplishment, that failure arose from the mediocrity of very limited talents, which I soon found were inadequate to realise all my heart dictated or my hopes conceived.

The world however had the indulgence to tolerate the execution in favour of the motive, and the reception with which it honoured "the Wild Irish Girl," was such as surpassed my most sanguine expectations, and stimulated me to further exertion in that cause, which is impossible to examine without interest, or to embrace without enthusiasm. Politics can never be a woman's science ; but patriotism must naturally be a woman's sentiment. It is inseparably connected with all those ties of tenderness which her heart is calculated to cherish, and though the energy of the citizen may not animate her feelings to acts of national heroism, the fondness of the child the mistress, the wife and the mother, must warm and enoble them into sentiments of national affection. For myself, while my heart still triumphs in the principle which leads me to effuse over the world's ear the "native wood notes wild" of my native country, I would wish it to be believed that I have ever swept the strings of the Irish harp with the tremulous touch of conscious inabi-

lity; that in humbly endeavouring to revive the faded shamrock, that which droops round my country's emblem, I have ever brought to the grateful effort an anxious hope, rather than a sanguine expectation of success; and that in touching on the grievances of the lower orders of my countrymen and their fatal but consequent effects, unswayed by interest, unbiassed by partiality, the hope of wooing the attention of abler minds to a subject on which my own has dwelt with ineffectual anxiety, and unavailing regret, has been the sole motive of the feeble and individual efforts I now humbly submit to the world's consideration.

SIDNEY OWENSON.

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PATRIOTIC SKETCHES,

&c.

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SKETCH I.

THE scenery which environs the town of Sligo* is bold, irregular, and picturesque: and though despoiled of those luxurious woods which once (in common with the rest of the island) enriched its aspect, it still preserves many of those traits which constitute the perfection of landscape; hanging over a beautiful bay formed by the influx of the "steep Atlantic," sheltered by lofty mountains, and

* Situated in the county of Sligo, province of Connaught 105 miles from Dublin. It is a borough, post, and fair town.

reposing almost at the brow of a hill along whose base the river Gitley steals its devious way. The high road* by which it is approached for the last twenty miles, winds through a scene of romantic variety, which frequently combines the most cultivated and harmonious traits, with the wildest and most abrupt images of scenic beauty. The groves, the lakes, the enchanted islands, and all the glowing charms of an Italian scenery which diffuses itself over the picturesque and cultivated scenes of Florence-court† are suddenly replaced by a dreary heath, and a bold and continued mass of rocks, through which nature, time, and art, seem to have cut a deep and narrow defile which, entered at that hour sacred to the sombre grandeur of the true sublime, awakens in the heart of the traveller such a warning as the entrance to Danté's Inferno holds out. I left Dublin in the autumn of 1806, with the intention of rambling through such scenes in the north-

* The northern road.

† The seat of the earl of Iniskillen.

west of Connaught as I had not yet visited; and it was here my little journey began to receive its first decided character of interest; it was here that the impression made on my imagination insensibly communicated to memory the first of those rough sketches which, divested of the delicate pencil, touch the *pentimenti* (to use a technical phrase) of studied art, and practised judgement. I have copied with the same rude simplicity with which they were drawn in the moment of passing observation, as the heart was touched by objects of moral interest, or the fancy awakened by scenes of natural beauty. I had watched the last beam of the setting sun stealing his faded splendours from the last of those lakes which precede the entrance of the cavern-path, and the broken and irregular masses of rock which arose pyramidically on either side, partially caught the retreating glow of the horizon, and displayed the greatest variety of light and shadow, till gradually opening, a rich and expansive prospect broke on the eye: the lakes and

fairly land of Hazlewood*, the bold attitude of Benbubin, the beetling brow of Knockna-bet†, the ocean's gleaming line commingling with the horizon, and the town of Sligo spreading irregularly along the base of a lofty hill, crowned with meadows, and successively betrayed by the expanding view; till the softening influence of twilight mellowed every outline into air, and dissolved every object into one mild and indistinct hue.

The literal meaning of the word *Sligo* is the "*town of shells*" and the derivation of the epithet is traced by local history and oral tradition to the following curious origin. Many of the inhabitants of Esdera (now Ballysidore), a flourishing and neighbouring town, having been driven by the vicissitudes of civil dissention from their native place, fled to the shore, and of the shells and pebbles flung by the violence of the tide along the coast, erected a number of huts,

* The seat of Owen Wynn, Esq.

† In English, "*the hill of the king*."

which formed the infancy of Sligo. Sligo is now a large opulent and commercial town, while its parent city is one of the most ruinous and wretched villages in the province: still distinguished for the beauty of its situation and the romantic wildness of its environs. The vicissitudes of those two little places present us an epitome of the fate of all earthly states. The routine of all human, as of all natural events, knows no variability in its cause or its effects; and the rise, climatic, decline, and fall of every empire, are but the counterpart of that which has preceded it. Babylon (says a celebrated French philosopher), “*qui n’a plus que des monceaux de terre fouillée, a occupé sur la rive orientale un espace de six lieues de longueur, et Thebes aux cent palais est aujurd’hui reduite a la condition d’un miserable village.*”—“Babylon the sight of which is now distinguished only by the inequalities of the ground, formerly occupied six leagues in length; and Thebes with its hundred gates (or palaces) is reduced to the condition of a wretched village.”—Thus by the unvari-

ed and general laws of nature a line of circumvallation seems drawn round the efforts of all human exertion, and limits the progress of all human greatness—and those transitions of power from the mighty to the lesser, which partially and individually considered, seem stamped with the character of instability, are in fact the great and irrefragable proofs of the general harmony and order of the whole.

SKETCH II.

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THE recurrence of a scene, a sentiment or a sensation, peculiar to the early stages of existence, owes much of the magic charm which accompanies it to the medium through which it is viewed. Memory is too warmly imbued with the glow of imagination, not to shed over the image which it preserves, a prismatic hue; and the preception of mind that attends an actual feeling, is perhaps less forcible (and certainly less gracious) than that emotion with which it is contemplated in the vision of memory, when fancy lends it a superadded charm, and we hang with a tender regret upon its faded recollection.

In days of childhood, in the happy recess of school-holidays, I have caught a

distant view of Sligo abbey, in a moment of such felicity as childhood only experiences, "when we feel that we are happier than we know." An idea of its venerable ruins had insensibly associated itself with the remembrance of the lively susceptibility I then possessed, to every impression ; and that idea still preserving its ascendancy in my mind, rendered the object that gave rise to it, an object of peculiar interest, and ardent curiosity.

I have always loved those scenes which connect the pleasures of intellect with those of sense, which are equally dear to reflection and to fancy, over which the mental sympathies extend themselves, and where the heart and the eye repose with equal satisfaction and delight ; and as I involved myself amidst the ruins of Sligo abbey where doubtless,

" Many a saint and many a hero trod,"

the beautiful apostrophy of Volney floated on my memory :

“Je vous salue ruines solitaires ! Oui : tandis que votre aspect repousse d’un secret effroi les regards du vulgaire, mon cœur trouve à vous contempler le charme des sentimens profonds et des hautes pensées.”—“Hail, solitary ruins ! Yes : while your appearance excites in vulgar minds a repulsive dread, my heart tastes, in contemplating you, the charm of profound sentiments and elevated thoughts.”

The abbey seemed to have mouldered into new beauty, since the cursory view I last had of it. Recent decay had touched its cloisters with a painter’s hand—and the influence of a few added years, and the vicissitudes of a few successive seasons, had mellowed its once grey tints into a variety of glowing hues, and had enriched its vegetative drapery with more luxuriant masses of foliage.

The abbey, whose former extent and beauty may be calculated from the wreck which time has spared, owes its foundation to Maurice Fitzgerald ; who, under the invocation of the Holy Ghost,

erected it for the friars of the order of St. Dominic. Like other religious edifices, it found its sanctity no protection against the ravages of war, and the vicissitudes of civil dissension ; and falling a prey to the contending factions of the province, it was pillaged successively in the years 1270, 1360, and 1394 : so that in 1414, its revenues were scarcely adequate to the support of twenty friars ; while all that the rapine and violence of war had spared, was finally destroyed by an accidental fire. The abbey, however, must have been an object of no trivial consideration to the Romish see ; for pope John xxiii. issued apostolic letters to promote its restoration, and elicited the humble mite of the poor, and the splendid contribution of the rich sinner, through the medium of their salvation, by offering the remission of ten years and forty days penance to all who, on the feasts of the Assumption and St. Patrick, should visit the ruined abbey, and contribute to its repairs. Foremost on the list of its benefactors, stood O'Connor, lord or chief of Sligo, the lineal decendant of the

ancient kings of Connaught, and whose posterity still boast that the blood-royal of Ireland flows in their veins. Whatever remuneration the pious liberality of the chieftain may have received in the other world, it has at least obtained a deathless testimony in this ; for a statue erected to his memory still holds its place unimpaired amidst the surrounding ruins. Its coarse sculpture is strongly illustrative of those rude days, when the progress of genius and reason was opposed by political discord, and religious intolerance ; when the infant arts drooped, neglected or oppressed ; and when the human mind, directing all its powers to the difficult and doubtful preservation of a harassed existence, checked the operation of its better faculties, and resigned all its nobler perceptions to the influence of credulity and error.

To accuse heaven of venality, and consider religion as a traffic, may be peculiar to days of ignorance and darkness ; but in what age has religion been painted o-

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therwise than selfish? Punishments and rewards have been the invariable agents of faith, and an eternity of enjoyment or of suffering has been still held out to seduce or to impel us to that which nature teaches and reason confirms.

The ruins of Sligo abbey, though wildly irregular, are noble in decay. The arched entrance to the chapel, lofty and unimpaired, is still enriched with the foliage, and that delicacy of ornament which forms so striking a contrast amidst the sombre heaviness of Gothic architecture. A stone gallery still surrounds the nave of the chapel. The delicate proportions and construction of the eastern window, still in good preservation, are ornamented with Gothic arches and curious tracery; the tower, elevated and conspicuous, has sustained no injury except in a partial dilapidation of its battlements; and three sides of the cloisters that once formed a large square, are still supported by a range of small fluted pillars enriched with a variety of devices

of the most minute workmanship, and crowned with an arched roof. These interesting ruins spread along an inclined plane, bathed by the river Gitley, which guides the eye, in its meandering course, to the delicious scenery of Hazlewood, and loses itself amidst those charming lakes which reflect on their expansive bosom the most romantic shores and boldest mountains; while on the other side of the river swells a range of pasturage hills, a distant view of the ocean is partially caught, and a chain of lofty mountains forms the bas-relief to the animated picture.

Abstracted devotion or monkish luxury could never have found a site more appropriate to holy meditation, and more conducive to laic enjoyment; and the vale of Euzras, which sheltered in its bosom the celebrated abbey of Llanthoni, boasts less of natural charm, in the animated description of Giraldus Cambrensis, than the scenery which once surrounded the Abbey of Sligo must have

possessed, when the luxuriance of un-hewn woods spread their shade over its romantic hills, and the intrusion of an ill-built town, neither obscured nor deformed its extensive and varying prospect.

Disposed by a certain tone of mind to behold with a touching interest, a scene never to be viewed with indifference, while a pre-existing train of ideas were refreshed and associated by the corresponding impressions which my senses received from every object around me, I sat down on the tomb of the royal O'Connor, and plucked the weed or blew away the thistle "that waved there its lonely head." The sun was setting in gloomy splendour, and the lofty angles of the Abbey-tower alone caught the reflection of his dying beams, from the summits of the mountains where they still lingered: the horizon betrayed a beautiful gradation of tint, which insensibly softened into the reserved colouring of twilight, while broken hues, and

irregular masses of light and shadow, flung through the pillars of the cloisters, or from the high-arched portals of the chapel, harmonized the general outline of the ruins, and shed around such aerial and indistinct forms, as fancy woos to aid the vision of her wildest dream. Nor did she now refuse to “give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.”—Along each mouldering aisle, and gloomy cloister, her creative eye still pursued the close-cowled monk ; the haughty abbot, pacing in all the solemn pomp of holy meditation the damp and checquered pavement ; or caught the pious chieftain’s warrior-form, as he made his sumptuous offering at the altar’s foot, followed by the credulous and penitential crowd which the artful policy of John had lured thither, to expiate the past, and purchase the remission of future sins.—While the singular and striking ceremonies of a religion, so consonant to the liveliest powers of the imagination, once splendidly celebrated in the now gloomy and ruinous chapel, the brilliant illumina-

tions of tapers, the solemn gray-headed friars, or close-veiled nuns ; the meretricious ornaments which the vitiated taste of superstition flings over the pure and simple forms of true religion, and the swelling chaunt of midnight devotion or matins-piety, seemed even now, something more than " the baseless fabric of a vision."

Such scenes are never to be visited with that interest which peculiarly belongs to them, in the broad glare of day's meridian splendour, since much of their picturesque effect is produced by the solemn stillness of the twilight hour, when the faintest breeze wastes not its sigh upon the " desert air ;" and when the dim discoloured light sheds a mystic hue on every object, and peoples the gloomy space with wild and fancied forms. The simplicity of reason, and the purity of truth, though they afford the clearest evidence to the mind, and sublime while they enlighten, deny to fancy that image so dear to her illusory desires ; the sim-

ple conviction of an abstract faith gives no picturesque forms to her wondering gaze, affords no mysteries to her unlicensed wishes. A sensible personified religion is the creed she clings to, where the senses are the medium of belief, and credulity reposes on the enjoyments of imagination. Thus the faith of a Socrates was the faith of a philosopher, but the mythology of Homer was the religion of a poet.

While my eye now rested on those objects that formed a festival to my fancy, which revelled in a train of visionary ideas full of poetical interest, my mind insensibly recurred to those events and circumstances in the religious and political history of my country, from whence these objects stole their interest; and tracing the sacred footsteps of christianity, from the moment of its admission into Ireland, to the period of its existing influence, I sighed to reflect that those mild tenets by which it preached "peace and good will to all men," were still op-

posed by the cold contracted dogmas of intolerance, flinging its gloomy shadow on religion's cheering rays, like the noxious vapour, which rising from the corruption of the earth, meets and obscures the beam whose radiance comes from Heaven.

SKETCH III.

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POLITICAL philosophy by extending the mind's eye to the whole great scale of civil society, and demonstrating the close-linked dependencies of its remotest parts, affords to the benevolence of the human heart, and the comprehension of the human understanding, a social system, gratifying to the feelings of the one, and ennobling to the faculties of the other.

But that partial view of things which prejudice loves to sketch, and which self-interest delights to contemplate, sheds over the political sentiments of certain minds, a species of misty influence thro' which every object is beheld dim and discoloured.

How few are those who dare to take into the scope of their political speculation the universal good and welfare of their country, independent of every bias to any sect or any party! How few are they who dare to expand their thoughts, and awaken their feelings, to the general well-being of their compatriots, and hazarding their individual effort to its promotion, condemn that chain by which interest* would rivet them to some empowered being on whose influence their own must depend; while every principle of political philanthropy is lost in a timid coincidence with the sentiments and opinions of him, who, himself the slave of circumstances, makes the sacrifice of in-

* Ce n'est donc point (dit Helvetius) de la méchanceté des hommes dont il faut se plaindre, mais de l'ignorance des législateurs, qui ont toujours mis l'intérêt *particulier en opposition avec l'intérêt général.*—"It is not of the wickedness of mankind," says Helvetius, "that we ought to complain; but of the ignorance of legislators, who have always set private at variance with public interests."

dependence in one sense, the purchase of it in another. To one who, reared in retirement, has studied the world but in books ; who enters its busy scene full of " the vulgar errors of the wise ;" whose romantic mind has taken the bias of its political sentiments from the national enthusiasm of the first Greeks, or the *amor patriæ* of the first Romans ; and who unites to these imbibed ideas, an almost innate devotion to the land of his nativity ; that species of conduct in politics which is founded on self-interest, animated by faction, or imbittered by intolerance, must excite in the mind of the young, the indigent patriot, the strongest feeling of contempt and abhorrence.

There is in Ireland, and perhaps there is every where, a kind of non-descript characters in politics, tantamount to that which Burke alludes to when he speaks of a certain party who distinguished themselves by the name of " king's men," " by an invidious exclusion, he adds, of the rest of his majesty's most loyal and

affectionate subjects." The true rational, disinterested loyalist, is the most respectable of political characters ; he is a patriot in the best sense of the word ; his country only is dearer to him than his king : and while he boldly stands forth as the defender of one against the abuse of power, or encroachment of royal prerogative, and as the champion of the other against the rage of popular inebriety or anarchical tumult, his property and his life are cheerfully risked, and nobly devoted, to the preservation of the respective rights and safeties of both.

But in Ireland, among the many who are dignified with the name of loyalist, there are some who, mistaking the principle, injure the cause they affect to support ; who in debasing their own country, injure that empire of which it is a constituent part ; and who, false to the land which gave them birth, cannot be true to that sovereign to whose heart and interest that country is, or ought to be, endeared. " If Ireland be not safe,

we, the English, cannot be safe,"* says sir Edward Coke, when agreeing with his friend sir John Davies on the political independence of Ireland.† It was thus a crown-officer of England wisely thought, and boldly spoke: it has however been since reserved for certain orders of Irishmen to discover, that to fo-

* The language of that sound and perfect policy which has its basis in truth and philanthropy, has been ever the same in all ages and in all countries; and Lord Howick, in his eloquent speech upon a late momentous question, delivers an opinion to the same effect, and almost in the same words as these used by sir E. Coke: "If Ireland were rendered insecure, the establishment of England would be exposed to greater danger than any which could possibly result from such a boon to the Catholics," &c.

† It is a circumstance not a little to the honour of Ireland, that scarce any man ever enjoyed the office of her government, who did not prove for ever after her strenuous defender.

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ment by artful or coercive measures the disturbances in Ireland, to perpetuate every party-feud, retrace every fading character of religious distinction, give the colouring of rebellion to every local complaint or domestic commotion, of which their own conduct to the lower orders is generally the efficient cause, and to brand the character of their country with the epithets of wretched, deluded and unhappy, is to conduce to the honour of England, and to demonstrate their own attachment to the British government !

How happy is England to find in the noblest of her sons, the most devoted of her champions ! Enthusiastic even to prejudice in her favor ;

“ Their first best country ever is at home ;”

while Ireland fondly sighs to produce, in all a mother's pride, those of her progeny, who, uniting the influence of high rank to the powers of opulence, the pure spirit of patriotism to the steady sentiment of loyalty, and the ardent love of

freedom to that of rational subordination, might stand forth at once her pride, protection and defence. Yet what country ever flourished in which the honour of national pride was extinct? * what country ever obtained esteem from other nations, when it was denied to her by her own sons? It is true that the great mass of the people of Ireland are attached to their country with an idolatrous, but ineffectual fondness, that increases in a ratio with her struggles and her sufferings: but the union of power and influence rests not always with those who would exert both to the promotion of their country's good; and while the domesticated enemies of Ireland, even from the midst of the luxurious asylum which she affords them, blast forth the tale of her degradati-

* “ Le bonheur des peuples dépend et de la félicité dont ils jouissent au-dedans, et du respect qu'ils inspirent au-dehors.” — “ The welfare of a nation depends on the happiness which it enjoys within itself, and the respect with which it inspires others.” — *Helvetius*.

on with Stentorian lungs, the attachment of her numerous and unalienated children is breathed in tender murmurs or indignant sighs ; and like the tones of her own harp, vibrates in sad and plaintive fondness unheard or unheeded. It is finely observed by Voltaire, that "*Le genre humain seroit trop malheureux s'il étoit aussi prêt de commettre des choses atroces, que de les croire ;*"* and were the national character of the Irish as corrupt as the tongue of prejudice asserts ; it must have long since drawn down upon its own iniquities that retribution, which an apostacy from the moral influence of nature and reason inevitably incurs in a general and national, as well as in an individual and personal sense. To speak indeed of the vices of any country independent of its police or legislation, is perhaps to speak in vulgar language, and under the influence of vulgar prejudice.

* "The condition of mankind would be wretched indeed, if they were as prone to commit atrocities as to believe tales of them."

One of the greatest philosophers of the last age, considers the series of illustrious actions ascribed to the Greeks and Romans of a certain period, as the result of that address by which their legislators blinded the individual with the public interest, "in a union of which, he adds, consists the true spirit of laws." In spite, however, of the obstacles which have offered themselves to the progress of the national virtues and national prosperity of Ireland, she can yet "lift her fair head on high," while she beholds so many of her sons weaving the laurel round their victor-brows in those distant lands where the hand of cold intolerance cannot tear it from the hero's grasp: and while on her own green shores, native genius and native talent blush not to call her mother, and boast their inspiration is their country's love.

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SKETCH IV.

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ABOUT three miles from the town of Sligo, lies a beautiful spot, called the glen of Knock-na-ree, from the bold and romantic mountains, along whose base it winds the road which leads to it from the town; it combines many charms of ocean scenery, with many traits of picturesque landscape. The little maritime village of Gibraltar, whose white huts appear glittering among the rocks that skirt the irregular coast; the cloud-capped heights of Benbullen and Knock-na-ree, with a distant view of the island of Innismurry,*

* The island of Innismurry is celebrated in Irish legend, and is still remarkable for the manners, dress, and customs of its inhabitants. The ruins of the chapel of St. Columbkille, and part of the crosier of St. Molaire, are still

and a faint undulating line of the coast of Ulster; unite within the scope of a coup-d'œil, a picture highly animated and romantic. The direct path to the glen is tracked through an expansive meadow, which slopes from the foot of Knock-na-ree towards the bay, and terminating in a certain point, by a narrow defile, forms the entrance of the glen, which winds between a double range of rocks for more than a mile. This romantic glen, rich in all that irregularity

shewn there as relics of the two most famous saints in the calender of Irish canonization;—the latter, who was confessor to Columbkil, banished him from Innismurry, his favorite retreat, to Scotland, as a penance for three desperate battles the ambition of his penitent had caused to be fought. The Irish seem to have held all islands in a superstitious veneration. In the river Shannon, the romantic island of Iniscailte contains the ruins of seven churches and a round tower; and in another of its islands, an anchorate tower 120 feet high, with the ruins of eleven churches, are, I am told, still visible.

so essential to the true picturesque, seems to have been produced by some convulsion of nature ; and the rocks in many places are so perfectly concave and convex, that it appears as if another shock would unite them again into one solid mass.

The strained eye becomes dazzled in the contemplation of their altitude, while it reposes with delight on the beautiful variety of vivid hues which stain their shelving sides ; on the rich foliage of the shrubs that hang their fantastic drapery over the rugged projections ; or on the bending trees which seem to shoot from their deep crevices without the aid of earth to nourish their bare and interwoven roots : while innumerable torrents, dashing from the pointed summits of the highest cliffs, flow at their base in one pellucid stream ; or rushing with congregated force over roots of trees, or projecting rocks, fall into some deep cavity, and form an elevated and natural bason, shaded by the luxuriance of the overhanging shrubs.

The glen is sometimes overflowed by these torrents, while the immense masses of rock, covered with moss and lichens, which they force down at intervals in their steep descent, construct, for the steps of the adventurous wanderer, a species of little causeway ; and the over-arching of the cliffs seems to threaten destruction from above ; or, by a conjunction of their respective shrubs, forms a leafy canopy almost impervious to the beams of the sun. That even some degree of moral charm should not be wanting to this little Vaucluse, the rocks in many places assume the appearance of spacious ruins, sometimes rising in light and spiral shafts, sometimes rudely broken in irregular masses ; while fancied cloisters, imaginary fortresses, and ideal castles, present themselves to the eye amidst the creeping underwood and clustering shrubs, by which their grotesque forms are partially veiled. Where the gloom seems deepest, and the opposite rocks almost knit their towering summits, the glen abruptly terminates, and a beauti-

ful sea-coast suddenly bursts upon the view; the bay reflecting on its bosom the opposite shores, spangled with white houses; the mountains of Donegal floating like vapours in the haze of distance; and as a back-ground to the animated landscape, the mountain of Knock-na-ree, rising majestically from behind the rocky sides of the glen which reposes at its base.

Sugna-clogh, or the Giant's Grave, near the town of Sligo, excites a different interest from that awakened by the glen of Knock-na-ree. Several immense stones are raised in a very curious and romantic manner, upon the ends of others, which seem pitched perpendicularly into the earth, and give to the eye a miniature representation of Stonehenge on Salisbury-plain.

Sugna-clogh is one of those puzzling relics of other times, with which antiquarian ingenuity delights to amuse itself; but to the mind that seeks a pictu-

resque effect, or moral interest, in every object, it merely excites a transient curiosity which the traditional lore of the country is unable to gratify.

SKETCH V.

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IT is observed by Zimmerman, that “in the unvaried stillness and stagnation of small remote places, lie buried an acrimony and rancour of the passions, rarely found in great cities.” That mind indeed must be endued with great native strength, over which a certain peculiarity of situation holds no influence; which can breathe the spirit of liberty beneath the lash of despotism, be true to nature where art only reigns, and in a range of action limited within a narrow circle, disdain to graduate its sentiments and opinions on a scale proportionably contracted.

From the general order of things, the lesser towns of every country must still

be as centres, to which the radii of illiberality and cabal point with the greatest force ; and Ireland perhaps, beyond any other country in Europe, furnishes the strongest testimony to the truth of the assertion. That destructive spirit of intolerance in religion, and of faction in politics, which has so long and fatally diffused its noxious influence over the whole kingdom and which we hope is now happily fading away in its leading cities, may still be found flourishing in all its pristine vigour, in the hearts of those little towns and great villages, where both are still nurtured by the local intimacy and opinionative distance of those who perhaps agree in fundamentals, and differ only in points merely speculative ; where, on one side, opposition is fed by the jealousy of conscious degradation, and on the other, by the pride of conscious prerogative : where each, solely bent on the support of its respective tenets, allows no modification in political principle or religious opinion ; where all must be considered as the extreme of

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orthodox zeal or heterodox error, as the coarse caricature of loyalty or wild outline of rebellion ; and where the respective prejudices of each party, tear away in their vortex every unbiassed sentiment of public good, every generous principle of patriotic feeling, and sacrifice at the shrine of religious and political intolerance, the peace, the welfare, and the prosperity, of a nation.*

To minds which slavery has not broken, nor oppression debased, the consciousness of political inferiority and national inconsequence must ever bring with it a sensitive pride, a tenacious reserve, a suspicious timidity, and an irritability of spirit, which are only to be dissipated by the conciliating advances of that superior influence under which a series of certain events has placed them : and

* “ The two factions of protestant and catholic, more intent on thwarting each other, than in maintaining their mutual rights, became an easy prey,” &c. *Macaulay's History of England*, vol. ii. p. 177.

when two distinct parties are internally divided by a difference in religious faith, by an inequality of political establishment, and externally coalesced by local circumstances and certain ties of denization common to both ; where prerogative rests on one side, and submission on the other ; the natural suspicions, the cautious vigilant diffidence of the subordinate party, are only to be seduced into amity, or warmed into confidence, by the open, ingenuous, volunteering liberality of the supreme power.*

* “ Sure I am says Edmund Burke, that there have been thousands in Ireland who have never conversed with a Roman catholic in their whole lives, unless they happened to talk with their gardener’s workman, or to ask their way when they had lost it in their sports, or at best who had only associated with ex-footmen or other domestics of the third or fourth order ; and so averse were they some time ago to have them near their persons, that they would not employ even those who would never find their way beyond their stable. I well remember a great, and in many respects a good man, who

But in that dominant sect which by adopting a rational scepticism to antiquated error, may be naturally supposed to possess the tolerance towards others which it has claimed for itself, dwells there that mild, that generous, and all-

advertised for a blacksmith, but at the same time added, 'he must be a protestant.' It is impossible that such a state of things, though natural goodness in many persons will undoubtedly make exceptions, must not produce alienation on the one side, and pride and insolence on the other."

It is to be hoped, and indeed to be believed, that the fatal spirit of prejudice thus strongly adverted to by Burke, is daily losing its influence; for myself though one among the many in my own country who have been educated in the most rigid adherence to the tenets of the church of England, I should, like the poor Maritornes of Cervantes, think myself endowed with very few "sketches and shadows of christianity," were I to confine virtue to sect; or make the speculative theory of opinion the test of moral excellence, or proof of human perfection.

conciliating spirit of charity, which, like the bow of heaven's promise, flings the encircling arch of its mercy round the whole earth, and receives within the great compass of its indulgence every sect and every persuasion? Dwells there among those who vaunt their own abhorrence of fanaticism and bigotry, that pure and sole religion which, in considering the great and only Object of the universal worship of mankind, neither derides nor reviles the medium through which it flows? Does it indiscriminately betray that open smiling confidence which unnerves the hand of vengeance, inspires affection, and turns the gall of hatred to the "milk of human kindness?" Does it feel for the political subjection of a compatriot, but not established sect; endeavour to counteract the effects of an erroneous and fatal policy, by opposing the endeared rites of social conciliation to the chilling influence of a penal code; of private intercourse to public distinction; and by endeavouring to produce that compatriot

felicity, that national unanimity and brotherly love, over which a fanatical dogma, or an intolerant law, holds no jurisdiction? If these interrogations can be answered by an undeniable affirmative of actual demonstration, what has Ireland to fear? what has Ireland to wish? The unanimity of a nation, and the mutual confidence and confederation of her sons, are the firmest basis of her prosperity, and the strongest bulwark of her freedom.

The odium of bigotry is generally thrown upon the subordinate sect of every country. Bigotry, however, is in fact the cosmopolite of religion, and adheres with more or less influence to every mode of faith. Of the countless sects into which the christian church is divided,* it appears that each, "dark with

* " Les Chrétiens, says Helvetius, qui donnaient avec justice le nom de barbarie et de crime aux cruautés qu' exerçaient sur eux les payens, ne donnèrent-ils pas le nom de zèle aux cruautés qu'ils exerçaient à leur tour sur

excessive light," arrogates to itself an infallible spirit, which shuts the gates of mercy on the rest of mankind, while it condemns or opposes to the utmost stretch* of its ability, all whose faith is

ces mêmes payens ?"—" Did not the Christians, who justly gave the epithets of *barbarity* and *crime* to the cruelties inflicted on them by the pagans, dignify with the name of *zeal* those cruelties which they retaliated in their turn ?"

* " Ja considerais cette diversité des sectes qui regnent sur la terre, et s'accusent mutuellement de mensonge et d'erreur ; je demandais, quelle est la bonne ? chacune me répondait, '*c'est la mienne ;*' chacune me disait, '*moi seule, et mes partisans pensent juste ; tous les autres sont dans l'erreur.*' Et comment savezvous que votre secte est la bonne ? ' Parceque Dieu l'a dit. ' Et qui vous dit que Dieu l'a dit ? ' Mon pasteur, qui le sait bien ; mon pasteur me dit, et ainsi croire, *et ainsi je crois,*'—il m'assure que tous ceux qui disent autrement que lui *mentent*, et je ne les écoute pas."—*Emile*, t. 9 l. 4.—" While I surveyed this diversity of sects prevailing on the face of

not measured by the standard of its own peculiar creed. All perhaps are alike zealots ; the difference is, that the zeal of some is their privilege, and of others their crime.* The Irish, nationally considered with respect to their prevailing religion, never were a bigoted people, though the vivacity of their imagination has sometimes devoted them to supersti-

the earth, and accusing one another of error and falsehood, I inquired, ‘ Which is the right ? ’ Each replied : ‘ It is ours : we alone possess the truth, and all others are in mistake. ’ — ‘ And how do you know this ? ’ — ‘ Because God himself has declared it ’ — ‘ Who told you so ? ’ — ‘ Our minister, who is well acquainted with the divine will : he has ordered us to believe this, and accordingly we do believe it. — He assures us that all who contradict him speak false, and therefore we do not listen to them. ’

* “ Hélas ! si l’homme est aveugle, ce qui fait son tourment, fera-t-il encore son crime ? ”
De Volney, ch. iv. p. 24. — “ Alas ! if man is blind, shall this blindness, which constitutes his misery, be also imputed to him as a crime ? ”

tious illusion. When christianity took the lead of druidism in Ireland, it was preserved and nurtured by the same mild principles of toleration, which suffered its admission ; and though the druidical tenets flourished for two centuries after the arrival of the first christian missionary in the island, yet neither historic record, nor oral tradition, advances any detail of religious persecution adopted on either side. The tenets preached by the christian missionary, or the arguments opposed by the heathen controvertists, awakened no further interest in the public consideration, than a desire to embrace that mode of faith, which came home with most force to reason, and to truth. If the arguments held out were not always attended with conviction, the doubtful superiority was never decided at the sword's point ; if the cross was sometimes unavailingly raised, the arm*

* " Can that church be the church of Christ," says the tolerant bishop of Novogorad, " whose arm is red to the shoulder with human gore?"

which supported it was not protected from injury by the egis of toleration ; nor were tortures invented, persecution enforced, or oppressions exercised, to obtain the abjuration of a long-cherished tenet, to prove the orthodoxy of a doctrinal point, or to establish the infallibility of a speculative theory.* As yet free from that fanatic spirit which strews the earth with human victims, and still “opposes man against the murderer man,” the Irish would have rejected with hor-

* “César et Pompée,” says Voltaire in his English Letters, “ne sont pas fait la guerre pour savoir si les *poulets sacrés* daivent *manger et boir*, ou bien manger seulement ; ni pour savoir si les prêtres devaient sacrifier avec leur chemise sur leur habit, ou leur habit sur leur chemise. Non ! ces horreurs étoient réservés pour la religion de la charité.”—“Cesar and Pompey did not fight to determine whether the consecrated fowl ought to eat and drink, or to eat only ; nor whether the priests should officiate with their surplice over their gown, or their gown over their surplice. No : these horrors were reserved for the religion of charity.”

ror and incredulity that prophecy, which should have foretold such a series of religious barbarities as attended the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, the *conversion* of the Mexicans in America, the revocation of the edict of Nantz, and the establishment of the popery laws in their own country.

Surely the experience of successive ages should hold out some beacon to those minds, which the pernicious and illusory light of intolerance misleads; and evince the dreadful effects which have been invariably produced, by suffering an abstract opinion to prevail over the social affections of mankind, either in politics or in religion.*

* The catholics of that part of Silesia conquered by Frederic the great, were so sensible of the toleration they enjoyed from the liberal conduct of their conqueror, that they have ever since remained faithful to the Prussians; while those of their compatriots, who had successfully resisted his victorious arms, have since submitted to the French influence.

The toleration of the Germans on religious points, is deservedly proverbial. The patron of Luther, and the first protestant potentate, was an elector of Saxony ; and notwithstanding the present electoral family has for four generations back been Roman catholics, they continue to live in the most perfect harmony with their Protestant subjects.

Catherine of Russia dispersed among her Mahometan subjects eighty thousand copies of the Koran ; while among her Christian subjects she circulated such works as were likely to establish them most firmly in their religion. Yet, during her long and prosperous reign, the voice of revolt or insurrection was never heard to murmur. But in what age, or in what country, has Toleration displayed her radiant banner, and found her standard deserted by peace, by happiness, and unanimity ?

SKETCH VI.

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AT a period when national taste, like national spirit, lingers through its last era of decay in the Irish breast, it is as rare as it is delightful to meet with one, for whom every relic of Irish antiquity possesses a peculiar interest; who contemplates with pleasure even the least-important production of antient wit in his own country; and by an association of ideas which have their source in the *amor patriæ*, values every little relic as exhibiting some genuine though minute testimony of that progress in the refinements of life, which he fondly believes distinguished his native land, in those days when she was looked upon with admiration and respect by the people of o-

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ther nations, and regarded with triumph by her own.

To the national taste of Mr. O*** of C** house, in the bosom of whose charming family I have spent some days since my arrival in this province, the remembrance of which neither my memory nor my heart will be apt to relinquish, I stand highly indebted for what might be considered as a *bonne bouche* to the hitherto unsatisfied appetite of national *virtu*.—His library is stored with antiquities discovered amidst adjacent ruins, or dug out of the bogs on his own estate. Among those which peculiarly struck me were :

. *An urn**, composed of the finest clay, highly polished, elegantly formed, and curiously carved. It was dug out of a sand-hill on the sea-shore near C*** house: and found nearly filled with ash-

* This urn exactly resembles that described by Ware, and delineated by Vallency in his *Collectanea*.

es and a kind of bituminous stuff, over which was placed a beautiful lozenge of thin variegated marble, once perhaps marked with an inscription now entirely defaced. The urn most probably contained the ashes of some Milesian prince, or sacred druid, to whom, in days of paganism, this privilege alone was accorded ; for when the body of the warrior was consigned to the earth, his arms were buried with him. Thus the ancient Irish, like the ancient Etruscans, used both modes of inhumation at the same time : and with that pertinacious adherence to the distinction of the different orders of the state, which marked their ancient *regime*, the inequality of rank and office was ascertained beyond the limits of the grave ; and their love of order and subordination betrayed itself, where even all human distinction cease to be observed.

A *stylus* made of brass, and curiously engraved, particularly engaged my attention : and when I learnt that it was

found in a deep grave amidst the ruins of Sligo abbey, the busy agency of fancy endowed it with an interest it probably had no claim to; and as I gazed on its point, I imagined that he who had carried it with him to the tomb, and made it his companion in death, had probably made it the confidant of his thoughts, and the herald of his hopes, when living.—It might have been the property of some young monk of St. Dominic; the vehicle of his sufferings and his love to some self-devoted Heloise, immured within the “relentless walls” of a neighbouring convent. But whether it was devoted to the service of love or of religion, to detailing the miracles of a saint or the charms of a mistress, it interested me from the fanciful speculations it gave rise to.

Two rings, dug out of some neighbouring ruins, the one studded with brass knobs, the other constructed of brass loops; and both resembling the talisman described by Vallencey..

Disposed by the ardour of their imagination to every illusion of superstitious error, in no nation whatever were charms more prevailing than among the ancient Irish. The warrior or the knight never entered the field of battle without his ring, or amulet; and on the fair bosoms of the noblest dames, sparkled the consecrated talisman. Papal policy, taking advantage of this national superstition, consecrated seals, which were called *absolution-seals**, and bore the following inscription: "Multitude of pardons to the sons of the son of ***," &c. These were disposed of by the Romish see to the confessors: who enriched themselves by the traffic of salvation; and retailed the remission of sins at the highest price that timid penitence could give, or exorbitant priestcraft extort.

A bridle-bit, and head-stall, of a very curious description, made of brass, and

* One of these *absolution-seals*, once the property of a priest, was lately in the possession of Arthur Wolf, Esq.

found in a bog in the vicinity. On the top of the head-stall was a little pillar of brass elegantly formed, which was most probably erected for the purpose of sustaining the plume of feathers which decorated the proud head of the Beltenebros of some puissant knight of the valley: and indeed the finely carved spur which accompanied it, proved it the property of some Sir Launcelot or Sir Bertram.

A *brass hatchet*, dug out of a bog in Terrerah, and exactly resembling that called by the ancient Irish *tuah snaight*; derived says general Vallencey, from the Chaldee *tuah*, to strike. A *small spear or pike*, the well known *laineach cutha* of the ancient Irish.

A *brazen sword*, twenty-two inches long, and exactly formed like that which general Vallencey describes as resembling the sword found in the plains of Canac. It had been dug out of a bog by a peasant; whose good dame, having

performed the same operation on its rusty blade as destroyed the value of the shield of Martinus Scriblerus, converted it to the domestic purposes of a hatchet, from which degrading metamorphose Mr. O*** rescued this trusty weapon of some Irish Rolando or Rogero.

An ancient *Irish brogue*, remarkable for the neatness of its form ; made of thin tanned leather, fastened above the ankle in a manner both convenient and tasteful, and closely resembling the Roman buskin.

A *small box* of beautiful marble, of an octagon form, the lid very delicately carved, and covered with inscriptions in a character resembling the Persic. It was found among the ruins of Sligo abbey, and was probably the *bon bonnière* of some self-denying monk.

Many other national relics presented themselves to my observation, which, though too numerous to detail, possessed scarcely less interest than those I

have mentioned ; though certainly not more so than the remains of druidical Cromlech, which rose almost immediately beneath the windows of the library.

SKETCH VII.

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WHILE the mind, by an association of its ideas, discovers "a spell of attraction" in every thing, however intrinsically valueless, which carries with its protracted existence the character of ages gone by "with years beyond the flood;" of objects which time has rescued from the vicissitude of human events, and which tradition has connected with incidents of historic interest; it pursues with an opposite sensation of delight, every thing in the moral or natural world, which is touched by the charm of novelty, or which owes its interest to the rarity of its existence. Thus the most sublime objects of the creation excite a less animated sensation in obser-

vance than the *lusus naturæ*, whose singularity is probably its only excellence. This observation insensibly suggested itself, as I turned with indifference from a very noble view of the ocean, to behold with eager curiosity the water-flight of Glencar.

The water-flight of Glencar derives its source from the summit of a lofty hill whose base it scarcely reaches, if the wind is in a certain point; there it is again carried perpendicularly back, forming a species of water-spout. Nothing can be more splendidly beautiful than its appearance when seen under the influence of an unclouded sun, rising like a pillar of light: the least variation of the air breaks it into a feathery spray, which falls at a considerable distance, like the misty shower of a summer's evening tinged with the departing glow of the horizon.

Nor is the water-flight of Glencar the only aquatic curiosity in the neighbourhood of Sligo. The hill of Knock-na-

shong, or the Hill of the Hawk, is from its elevation the first point of land seen on this coast at sea, and has become a kind of land-mark to mariners. Yet notwithstanding its altitude, and its distance from the shore, its summit contains a small well, which ebbs and flows with the tide. Of both the mountain and the well, tradition has preserved many miraculous tales.

SKETCH VIII.

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THE poverty of the lower orders of every nation is always found to derive its source less from national vice, than political grievance. The poverty of the lower orders of the Irish is equally obvious in its causes, and melancholy in its effects. At certain seasons of the year, the high-roads, and even the main streets, of every town and village of Ireland, are infested with groupes of mendicants, who exhibit to the eye all the sad variety of wretchedness which "flesh is heir to." These are not common beggars, who make it a profession to live at the expence of the community ; and who indulge their propensities to idleness and vice, by imposing on the unregulated benevolence of those

“ Whose pity gives ere charity begins :”

they are the necessitous families of the Irish peasants.

When the season of employment is over, when the necessity of human labour is considerably disproportioned to the population of the country, as is invariably the case in all grazing-counties of Ireland, where no manufactory offers the avocation to the superflux of willing industry ; and when the scanty hire of the labourer, during the short season it is paid, affords no little treasure stored to ward off the wants of an inactive season ; the Irish peasant quits the spot where he once

“ Sat him down the monarch of a shed ;”

quits the family, dearer to his heart from the pang it feels for them ; and beckoned by hope, or urged by despair, departs for a distant province, or even a distant land ; in search of that employment, and

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that reward, which his own impolitically denies.

When the strained eye of sorrowing affection has followed the father and the husband, even till fancy gives what distance snatches from its view, the mother closes the door of her desolate cabin; and when, as is generally the case, her family are too helpless to relinquish her maternal cares and enable her to work, followed by her little children, and frequently by an aged parent, beggary is embraced as the only alternative to want and famine*. Sometimes with an infant

* I this day overtook a mendicant groupe who were with difficulty creeping on before me: the mother, a delicate-looking woman, had a child on her back, another infant in a deep decay hung on the shoulder of a girl of twelve years old, and two more little ones followed.— I asked the woman what profession her husband was of: she said, “ he was a slave ;” for it is by this term that the labouring peasantry of Ireland invariably designate themselves. The woman looked ill: I inquired the cause. She re-

on her back, and another in her arms, while the ablest of her little train is always charged with the tin vessel which carries the sour milk supplied by charity, and another infant wanderer sustains the weight of the blanket which constitutes the only covering thrown over them at night, she commences her sad and solitary wanderings. How frequently, and in what opposite seasons, have I beheld these helpless and wretched groupes straggling along the high-roads, or reposing their wearied limbs beneath the shelter of a ditch! I have seen the feet of the heavily-laden mother totter through winter snows beneath her tender burthen: while the frost-bitten limbs of her infant companions drew tears to their eyes, which in the happy thoughtlessness of childhood had never been shed to the

plied that in those cabins where they gave her a lodging "for God's sake," she had for some nights back lain on wet straw, the rain which had continued for some days having penetrated through the roof of her lodging.

unconscious misery of their situation, had not bodily pain taught them to flow.

I have met them wandering over those heaths, which afforded no shelter to their aching brows, amidst the meridian arduours of a summer's day ; when violent heat and insupportable fatigue, rendered the stream they stooped to drink, a luxury the most exquisite. I have met them at the door of magisterial power, and seen them spurned from its threshold by him who should have redressed their grievances or relieved their wants ; and I have seen them cheerfully received into the cabin of an equally humble, but more fortunate compatriot, where their wants were a recommendation to benevolence, and their number no check to its exertion. For never yet was the door of an Irish cabin closed against the suppliant who appealed to the humanity of its owner*.

* As soon as a mendicant groupe appears at their door, it receives the accustomed *keadmille-a faltha* ; the circle round the fire is en-

In Ireland there are no poor-laws. In Ireland the reins of magisterial influence are loosely held; and those to whose hands they are consigned are seldom stimulated to exertion, where self-interest, or party prejudice, affords no powerful incentive. The ill-conducted police of the country-towns of Ireland is a national disgrace; while that countless hordes of wretches are suffered to wander unrelieved, and indeed unnoticed, is a stain on national humanity. Casual bounty can afford but transient redress: it lies to a certain degree within the jurisdiction of the magistracy, to render that bounty unnecessary by examining into the causes of that wretchedness which so frequently appeals to it; and by either endeavouring to redress the grievance, or punish the imposition, which equally fling an odium on the character of that country whose negligent police has so long

larged; a fresh supply of potatoes brought forward; and shelter for the night, and clean straw to repose on, voluntarily offered.

slumbered over both*. The establishment of manufactories in the remote parts of Ireland, would undoubtedly be the most effectual check to the progress of mendicancy ; but can there be no medium adopted between the great extremes of idle poverty and affluent industry ?

* The inhabitants of Crete, says Montesquieu, used a very singular method to keep the principal magistrates dependant on the laws : part of the citizens rose up in arms, put the magistrates to flight, and obliged them to return to a private life. This was supposed to be done in consequence of the law.

SKETCH IX.

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I AM at present residing in that part of Ireland where the association of thrashers first arose. I am consequently surrounded by those who formed that association : a peasantry poor, laborious, vehement, and enterprising ; capable of good or ill ; in the extremes of both ; left to the devious impulse of either ; but oftener impelled by the hardest necessity to the latter, than allured to the former, by kindness, by precept, or reward.— Punished with rigorous severity when acting wrong, but neglected, unnoticed, and unrecompensed when acting right ; forming the last link in the chain of human society, and treated with contempt because unable to resist oppression. It

was with one of these beings, who in the strictest sense, daily performed "the penalty of Adam," and nightly, perhaps, assumed the daring character of insurgency, that I had some days back the following conversation:

"Are you laying in your winter's fire?"
"No young lady, I am cutting this turf for his honour."

"What is your hire by the day?"—
"Sixpence one half, and threepence the other half of the year*."

"Have you a family?"—"I have a wife and six children."

"Then of course you must have some ground for their maintenance?"—"Oh! yes, two acres at 5*l.* an acre; but what

* I have been assured, however, that sixpence a day, throughout the year, is in general the averaged hire in most parts of Connaught. Many persons still living remember it so low as fourpence.

with the tythe proctor, the priest's dues being raised, and the weaver having doubled his prices, that day goes by well enough, when we can afford a drop of milk to moisten the potatoes for the young ones."

He paused for a moment, cast his eyes to heaven, shook his head expressively, and then abruptly applied himself to his labour with an effort of overstrained exertion, that seemed to derive its energy from feelings that dewed his rough cheek with tears, flowing from the sad heart of the father and the husband.*

* Since the above was written, a young peasant in Westmeath gave me the following account of his family, which I believe is an epitome of the general state of the peasantry in a county not 30 miles from the metropolis.—The boy was the eldest of seven children though scarcely twelve years old, and of course the only one able to labour; in the summer and harvest season he earned fourpence a day, his father worked for sixpence and eightpence a day through the year; they paid six pounds.

“ If we do not go to the very origin and first ruling cause of a grievance,”— says Edmund Burke, “ we do nothing :” and if we resort to the light of truth and evidence of fact, it will be found that with respect to every national grievance or political disorder in Ireland, for nearly five hundred years back, a mode of conduct has been pursued, partial in its effects, unavailing in its influence, and nutritive to public evil by an apparent blindness to the pristine existence of that evil, and by the rigidly coercive measures exerted against its natural but fatal effects. Still careless and perhaps ignorant of the cause, still attentive only to the result, the rest of discontent has

for an acre of oats, forty shillings a year for grass for their cow, and forty shillings for their cabin and a little ground for their potatoes ; in winter when the cow was dry, they lived upon oaten bread, and potatoes and salt. Engaged with the care of seven children, the mother could give little assistance except by spinning sometimes : and out of the year’s hire of the father, Sundays and holidays were deducted.

only invigorated, by the topping of its branches, and the pruning of its suckers.

The first settlement of the English colonists in the island took place at a moment peculiarly favorable to such an enterprise: the devotional enthusiasm with which the Irish had applied themselves to letters, to the arts of poesy and song, and all their elegant, but frequently enervating concomitants, left them but ill qualified to oppose an hostile and savage enemy; and sharing the inevitable destiny of all polished nations in a certain era of refinement, they sunk beneath the daring inroads of such barbarians as Greece has submitted to, and Rome was unable to oppose. To those who believe their fate has reached its climax of evil, every doubt wears the aspect of a hope, and every change the character of a benefit; and the arrival of a few English barons and their followers on the Irish coast, at a moment when the Irish spirit was harrassed by the ceaseless suffer-

ing of civil-dissention, awaken a consolatory expectation, and gave to the politic strangers the air of protectors and the epithet of friends.

From that moment the mass of the Irish people became affectionate to the British government; and if the attestations of historians* are to be credited, if the native tone of the minds of the Irish was attentively studied, it will be found that though that affection may be forced, it can never be voluntarily or causelessly withdrawn from its object.

But the government which they, the Irish, loved, was still counteracted in e-

* "I am well assured that the Irish desired to be admitted to the benefit of English law, not only in their petitions," &c.—DAVIS, p. 88.

It was a circumstance, however, not a little flattering to the Irish, that while the benefit of English laws was denied them, the English colonists adopted the ancient Irish system of legislation.

very intention formed in their favour.—The claims which they made in the expecting confidence of their hearts, remained unrealized, because they were unheard :* for it was ever, as it is now, the singular destiny of Ireland to nourish within her own bosom her bitterest enemies, who with a species of political vampyrism, destroyed that source from whence their own nutriment flowed.—For still did they, who partially ruled over one country under the influence of the other, close every avenue to mutual and conciliating intelligence ; and invariably endeavoured to effect a separation, from which *they* alone derived a benefit—a benefit, however, precarious and unstable, as it was selfish and unjust.

It was in vain that the Irish of other times, testified their anxiety to be admit-

* “ It is not,” says the poet Saadi, “ the timid voice of a minister which can breathe to the ears of his king the complaints of the unhappy ; it is the cry of the people only that should ascend directly to the throne.”

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ted to the protection of the laws of England; it was in vain, even so early as the reign of Edward III, that they endeavoured to represent the good that would naturally accrue from denization. "For still," says Sir John Davis, "the great lords of Ireland informed the king that the Irish might not be naturalized without damage and prejudice to the crown, or themselves;"* and perhaps it is no unfounded assertion to advance, that the same disposition on the part of the Irish to the English government, and the same obstacle to its accomplishment on the part of their internal enemies, still exist with undiminished force†. Few coun-

* "All the statutes from Henry IV. to Henry VII. speak of English rebels, and Irish enemies, as if the Irish had never been in the condition of subjects, but always out of the law."

† The genius of Palermo, kept in the senatorial palace, is represented as a man with a serpent on his breast, and this motto, *Alienos nutrit, se ipsum devorat*; a figure that might

tries ever suffered more from the ceaseless vicissitudes of civil dissention, than Ireland; and none ever preserved a more general uniformity of character, disposition, and principle, both as to its internal and relative situation, for ages back. The same grievances have furnished the same complaints, and the same causes invariably produced the same effects.—The Irish heart was ever, and is still, warmly alive to the least appearance of confidence and kindness. The Irish spirit has ever been and ever will be, prompt to resist, what it would be dishonour to endure..

It is a corroborating proof of the unvarying system of things in this country, that an assertion of the able minister of Elizabeth relative to the antecedent and then existing state of Ireland, may be in some respects applied to its present circumstances, viz. “That certain great

answer equally well for the personification of Ireland.

men of Ireland cross and withstand the enfranchisement of the Irish : whereunto he adds, I must acquit the crown of England of ill policy, and lay the fault upon the pride, covetousness, and ill counsel, of the English planted here."*—The line of demarcation which distinguished the English-Irish from the native is now indeed smoothed away by the obliterating finger of time ; but the sordid spirit and unpatriotic principles, which guided the views, and directed the acti-

* " When," says Burke, " the warfare of chicane succeeded to the war of arms and of hostility, statutes and a regular series of operation was carried on, particularly from Chichester's time, in the ordinary courts of justice ; and by special commissions and inquisitions, first under pretence of tenures, and then of titles in the crown, for the purpose of the total extirpation of the interest of the natives in their own soil : until this species of subtle ravage, being carried to the last excess of oppression and insolence under lord Stafford, kindled the flames of that rebellion which broke out in 1641.

ons of the naturalized foreigner, still survive in the breasts of some who have no other claim to the title of Irishmen, than that which the accident of nativity bestows ; who, unaffectionate to their compatriots, and unendeared to their country, resolve every principle into self ; and give to every local disturbance that terrific aspect of public danger, which extends the empire of individual influence, and strengthens the chain of general oppression.* This perhaps was never more strongly evinced than by those efforts made to misrepresent the recent rising of the thrashers ; and to call and punish that as a rebellion, which an officer of the crown, even in the act of pleading against the association alluded to, declares “ as not partaking of any political complexion, or confined to any particular party or persuasion ;” and that “ its professed object was to regulate the payments of the church-tythes, of cer-

* It is perhaps necessary to mention, that this sketch was begun and finished at two different and distant periods.

tain dues paid to the clergymen of the catholic church, and the rates of manual and manufacturing labour.”*

It is indeed a fact incontrovertible and asserted by those employed on the part of the crown against the persons termed thrashers, that this association had its rise in that source which at various and distant periods has given birth to such numerous associations among the Irish peasantry : associations unknown perhaps in any other country in the world, and which, animated by the same principle, and sanctioned by the same plea of grievance, have taken the various names of *white boys*, *hearts of steel*, *hearts of oak*, *break-of-day boys*, *right boys*, *defenders*, and *thrashers*. Yet from the first whisper of insurrection, to its last murmur, the complaint of the people never

* While the peasant of Ireland labours from sun-rise to sun-set, for sixpence a day, the working mechanic regulates his prices by his desires, and the extortion of three days enables him to be idle and inebriate the other four.

breathed upon the government,* and their accusations were as local as the grievances which gave birth to them:—but every pecuniary exaction unjustly and exorbitantly levied on those whose hard-earned little “just gives what life requires, and gives no more,” becomes an object of consideration; and while with willing cheerfulness they contribute to the maintenance of the ministers of one church, and from a principle of duty

* A few days back, I met with two peasants who were making complaints of the oppression they endured. A gentleman asked them if they thought they were worse off since the union. They replied, “they had never heard any thing about the union, and did not know what it meant.” After some further questions, they were asked “if they did not know that there was now no Irish parliament. They replied, that all they had heard was, that the parliament-books were sent away, and that the good luck of the country went with them. So full is the heart of an Irish peasant of his own grievance, and so little is his head troubled about public affairs.

and affection voluntarily support that of another,* it is little to be wondered at, if that extortion which drives them to the very barrier of penury and want should sometimes impel them beyond that of prudence and subordination†.

In the present instance they endeavour to palliate their conduct, by asserting, that to the usual exorbitant demands of

* "It is no slight evil for a country sinking under the weight of taxes, to support a double hierarchy; and some share of the expence might perhaps, without injustice, be defrayed from the revenues of the present establishment, in parishes where every inhabitant is a catholic."—*Review of Sir J. Throgmorton on the Catholic Question.*

† Lands in Ireland are generally held on freehold leases, which throws the burthen of tithes upon the tenant chiefly: the collection being also principally in kind, renders it of course more odious, and the alternative is become insupportable from the extortion of the tithe farmers.—*Ibid.*

the ~~tythe~~[†] farmers, were added the increasing exactions of the middle-man, the impositions of the weaver, and the increased dues of the catholic clergy. These, they asserted, were exactions which sixpence a day was scarcely adequate to answer. These perhaps were the efficient causes which gave to the pitying eye of the traveller, roofless cabins, desponding countenances, squalid figures,

† The payment of tithes among the Jews formed a part of the foundation of their republic; but on their first introduction into Christendom, Charlemagne, who established them, found them opposed by the people; "who, says Montesquieu, are rarely influenced by example, to sacrifice their interests, "and who considered them "as burthens quite independant of the other charges of the establishment." A synod of Frankfort had recourse to their superstition to ensure their obedience, by protesting, that in the last famine the spikes of corn were found to contain no seed, the infernal spirits having devoured it all; and that those spirits had been heard to reproach them with not having paid the tithes." Book xxxi. 339.

and shuddering groups of literally naked children ; these were perhaps the latent sources of those emotions in which the lower orders of this country have been so frequently involved, and the main spring of that coalition of imprudent and unfortunate persons called thrashers ; who daringly seized in their own hands the power of summary retribution, proportioned and appropriate as they conceived to their real or fancied grievances, and according to the strict letter of their own old Brehon law. That they did thus dare to seize the means of redress in their own hands, was a conduct that no one can justify ; but that any other mode was left them, is a fact no one can establish.

The English country-gentleman, full of patriarchal kindness towards his tenantry, will ask, " Why did not these unfortunates apply for counsel and assistance to their land-lord, their paternal adviser and advocate ?" But that tie, so firmly bound in days of feudal influence,

and which still in a modified sense in most countries unites the extremes of civil society, the lord of the soil to the peasant who cultivates it, in Ireland is broken, or rather wholly dissolved: and the Irish peasant, while he venerates the name of the good old family under whom his forefathers worked, or for whom his forefathers bled, has now but the name only to revere ; while his heart turns despondingly from the middle-man, beneath whose influence he lives ; and who would scarcely ameliorate his grievances, while conscious that he was himself the cause of many, and the sanction of all.

It ever was, and is still, the conduct of a certain order of persons in Ireland, to shadow the light of government from the mass of the Irish people ; to give to causes of local and domestic disturbance, the invidious term of open rebellion ; and to drive by pitiless unkindness to acts of fatal desperation, a people who may be soothed into subjection, but who can never be harassed into a tame endurance

of oppression ; a people whose national character affords the noblest subject to philosophical observance, that human nature ever presented to the eye of reason and philanthropy.*

When the thrashers first attracted notice in those counties where they first arose, it was not unusual to hear, even from those whose opinion carried most weight, that there was some ground for complaint among the Connaught peasantry ; the nocturnal adventures of the insurgents were then deemed rather whimsical than mischievous ; were sometimes listened to with indifference, or laughed at as ludicrous ; but the natural consequences of all public commotions, how-

* " Nations are governed by the same methods, and on the same principles, by which an individual, without authority, is often able to govern those who are his equals or his superiors ; by a knowledge of their temper, and by a judicious management of it."—*Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents, &c. &c. Burke.*

ever apparently unimportant in their tendency and trivial in their origin, from their too frequently experienced and fatal result, should have taught those in whose hands the reins of timely suppression were vested, the necessity of crushing the germ, if they had not the power of destroying its root. But if the invariable effects of a long-existing cause were foreseen, no exertion was made towards their early extinction: the thrashers indeed were instantly called a miserable, deluded and misguided people;—degrading epithets, to which, however Irish feelings have become almost callous. But among the many who thus designated their humbler compatriots, and reversing the maxim of Hamlet, taught them “to assume the vice they had not,” who was the benevolent the rational being, to step forth, to inquire into the cause of their discontent, to alleviate their sufferings, or dispel their delusion? Did the head landlord, did the middle-man, did the magistrate, collect around them their misguided countrymen, and with an ap-

parent interest in their destiny, investigate the cause of their real, or probe the source of their fancied grievance, promising their best individual efforts to the removal of the one, or simply proving to their untutored understandings the fallacy and danger of the other? Oh, no! a vehement, an impetuous, a brave but misguided peasantry, careless of that life to which so few ties of human happiness attached them, unquestioned, unresisted, were suffered to accumulate in numbers, to strengthen in principle, to pursue that object which their sense of right upheld to them; and neither redressed in one instance, nor opposed in another, to establish the justice of their cause on the basis of their progressive success; and to become inebriate with that flow of fortune which stronger heads seldom resist, and stronger minds seldom contemplate in its probable and approximating reflux.*

* The thrashers were suffered, for a considerable time, to pursue their depredations on the fields of the tythe-farmers, unmolested and and almost unnoticed.

As long as the vengeance of the thrashers was confined to the tythe-farmers, the middle-man smiled at a retribution so summarily used ; but when its spreading effects threatened the most distant boundary of his own interest, he shrunk back upon himself with the same principle of repercussion which actuates the tarantula when, retiring to the centre of her web, she darts with accumulated venom on the daring insect who flutters within the sphere of her enslaving domination.

It then became usual, from the well or ill-founded reports of every informer, for a few skirmishing parties to set out in quest of the insurgents ; frequently to escape from the hall of social enjoyment, or the banquet of festal revelry, and " hot with the Tuscan grape," to pursue amidst the doubtful shades of night " the idle visions of a heated brain ;" or, perhaps less strictly Quixotorial, to fire at random on such fugitives as chance presented to their observation.

That an insurrection which at this period wore so alarming an aspect ought not to have been suppressed in the first era of its existence, or firmly and decisively opposed in its state of maturer being, is there a mind so weak or so inhuman as to assert? To that rational policy which is ever the "flail of faction," which is ever more solicitous to remove the grievance than to punish even the unjustifiable mode of redress imprudently seized on by the aggrieved, be it left to decide on the most efficacious mode to obviate the evil; but that the partial and summary coercion adopted by certain individuals, in the present instance, were neither correct in plan nor effective in execution, the result fully evinced.

It was indeed at last discovered, that though firing at an odd man of an odd night might have been a chivalrous feat, it was far from being either a decisive or a successful one. Every bullet had not the political sagacity to lodge itself in the fervid brain of an insurgent; the inno-

cent had sometimes a chance of suffering with the guilty : and though they might " fill a pit as well as better men," yet that cause was not weakened, whose professed opposers became obnoxious to the neutral as well as to the active party ; while the moan of private sorrow mingled with the murmurs of public discontent, and the pang of individual anguish exasperated the feelings of general disaffection.

But one mode now seemed left to destroy the hydra-monster of a hitherto unavailing vengeance ; and unawed by the series of horrid events which, at no distant intervals, for the space of five hundred years have distracted and impoverished their country, a certain order of persons supplicated the governing power of their nation to erect once more the standard of civil discord, and to establish that law which every state reserves as its last resource against the unmasked appearance of open, daring, and avowed rebellion ! But what was the result of

this *patriotic* application? At the moment when it was eagerly hoped that nothing would be seen "but man and steel, the soldier and the sword," the British government rushed between the mass of the people of Ireland and a few of her degenerate sons; and flinging the veil of her mercy over the errors of her imprudent but unalienated subjects, turned aside the poniard that aimed at the life-pulse of their hearts.

For ever honoured be the memory of that administration which gave to the unhappy, the deluded people of Ireland, the full benefit of that sacred justice coeval with truth and with the God of Truth; who, deaf to the interested application of the few, rescued the many from destruction; who mercifully refused to send back the visionary insurgent to his comfortless hut, to brood, in the midst of his helpless family, over that grievance as poignant in idea as in fact, and which neither redressed, nor contradicted, would rankle with added force in his disappointed

heart ; who saved the hard-earned pitance of the laborious peasant from the ravages of licensed insolence and the oppression of delegated power ; who turned aside the musket that would have awed the oppressed master in that home, where (though but the shelter of a banana-tree from the rays of a vertical sun (even the slave feels himself a king ; and who gave to the free-born subjects of the freest of all earthly states, the fair occasion to expose the cause by which they believed themselves agrieved, and to prove how far the effects were “ to be extenuated,” or had been “ set down in malice ! ” *

* How firmly attached the Irish have ever been to the laws of England, and inimical to the slightest appearance of military subjection, is not only proved by Sir John Davis and his cotemporaries, but strongly alluded to by Burke in his speech on the conciliation with America. “ After,” says he, “ the vain project of military government attempted in the reign of Elizabeth, it was soon discovered that nothing could make Ireland English in civility and allegiance,

It was reserved for the representative of the illustrious house of Russel to be the agent of that divine mission, which had for its object the peace and welfare of a nation ; and surely in that record where the gratitude of Ireland has traced in imperishable characters the names of her best friends, his will not be registered in an oblivious page.

but your laws and your form of legislature. It was not English arms, but the English constitution, that conquered Ireland.

SKETCH X.

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"IN Ireland," says a modern writer, "the harpers (the original composers and depositaries of their music) have till lately been uniformly cherished and supported by the nobility and gentry." It is indeed but too true, that that warm ardent spirit of national enthusiasm which hung delighted on the song of national melody, to which many an associated idea, many an endeared feeling, lent their superadded charm, has now faded into apathy ; and neither the native strain, nor native sentiment, which gave it soul, touches on the spring of national sensibility, or awakens the dormant energy of national taste. The ear, desultory in its musical enjoyments

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formed to the style of foreign harmony, and schooled into taste by the theories of recondite science, may indeed no longer convey to the heart that poignant thrill of national emotion which shakes the firm nerved Swiss "even to dissolution," when the strain of his mountain-liberty * abruptly floats on his awakened sense. But Oh! surely that untravelled heart, which has never felt the throb of absence far from the home of its affection, that unsophisticated sense which has never dissolved to the impassioned influence of Italian composition, might still hang with national pride and national delight upon those strains which owe their birth to the musical genius of their native country; upon those strains which harmonize with every emotion of the soul, and which whether breathed in sorrow or in joy, are still true to nature and nature's dearest feelings.

* Were the feelings of national liberty and national affliction to be illustrated by a sound, the *Bentzr-de-Vaches* and *Erin go brach* would surely be found to inspire their essence.

The enthusiastic passion for music* which has ever distinguished the people of Ireland, still remains unabated; but by the puerile vanity of adopting a refinement which removes the ear from the heart, their own beautiful airs are the only compositions which now fail to attract their notice or secure their admiration: yet let me not (in the ardour of that indignation which swells my heart for my native country), while I behold the indifference, the neglect with which she is in so many instances contemplated by many of her own children, let me not forget how often and how recently I have

* A few evenings ago, Mr. O'Neil the harper assured a friend of mine, that having been received into the house of a Mr. Irvine of this country about fifty years past, he found assembled thirty-seven musicians, professional and private. "I made," he added, "the thirty-eighth; and before we concluded the evening, a piper claimed admittance, and according to the good old Irish custom was received, and accommodated with a good supper and bed."

beheld the most animated emotions produced in an Irish heart by the influence of an Irish song: how often I have beheld the sweet testimony of a feeling tear shed to the witchery of a national strain, even in those circles where the polish of fashion had smoothed down the energetic sensibilities of nature; and where taste and science too frequently regulate the empire of opinion, independent of the feelings of the heart, independent of the sentiments of the mind. There are still few houses in the interior parts of Ireland, where a musician of some description is not constantly retained or welcomely received; who in coincidence with the prevailing gusto of the day, is always more ready to play a German waltz than a jig, or a French cotillion than a planxty. But Irish harpers (once so cherished and revered) are as rarely to be met with as encouragement to Irish music. A very old and a very wretched being, with an ill-strung instrument of great antiquity suspended from his bending shoulder, is sometimes

seen creeping along the road-side, supplicating at the gates of a great man's mansion, or hailed at the door of a poor man's hut. But with a taste for national music, has subsided all encouragement to its professors.* The Irish peasant indeed still retains an idolatrous fondness for those strains his ear has learnt from his heart: a song beguiles the labours of the day; a song ushers in the repose of the night; a song effuses his joys, and a song is the interpreter of his sorrows. Of the latter fact the following circumstance is illustrative:

* The bardic order however is by no means extinct in Ireland. What they were, and what they are still capable of being, the venerable O'Neil is a striking instance. Many female harpers still wander through the remote parts of Ireland. At the harper's prize-ball at Granard in 1782, a woman of the name of Bridges obtained the second prize. The names of the female bards of other times were handed down for several generations, and repeated with devotional respect.

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But a few days back, a musical professor, from whom I had the anecdote, was walking in the vicinity of Sligo at a very early hour, when a sound, wild, low and plaintive, sought his ear; and approaching the spot from whence it seemed to proceed, he observed an elderly female leaning over a little paling which encircled a cabin. Her hair was dishevelled, her eyes full of tears and her voice though broken and inarticulate, respired in the intervals of her deep-heaved sobs, a melancholy recitative accompanied by these words—"A few days are gone by; she entered this gate in all her beauty and her health: to-morrow she will pass it without life, and she never will enter it more.*" This funereal song was the im-

* A parallel instance of parental and melodized affliction is to be found in Chandler's Travels into Asia Minor, "One evening coming from some ruins in a Greek village," says he, "we found an old woman sitting by the church on the grave of her daughter, who had been two years buried, over whom she lamented aloud, singing in an uniform and dismal cadence."

promptu *requiem* of a wretched mother, whose only daughter, a young and lovely girl, had expired the night before.

If we are to form our opinion of the original genius of Irish music from the accounts handed down by Cambrensis, the pathos which it now betrays was certainly not its primeval character.

“ But music,” says lord Verulam,—
 “ feedeth the disposition which it findeth.” The popular feelings of a nation may be frequently discovered to a certain degree, in the character and idiom of its native melodies ; and the very key in which those melodies are composed, may give a refined intimation of the political circumstances under which they were first breathed. Thus the Irish during the long series of their sufferings, effused not their tuneful sorrows in the cheery, open, fulness of the major mode. Their voices, broken and suppressed, faintly rose by minor thirds ; and the sentiment of anguish communicated to

the song of the persecuted bard, in less felicitous periods, by "his soul's sadness," still breathes in Irish music, even though the efficient cause from whence it stole its plaintive character may no longer exist.

That rapidity, however, which Cambrensis* remarks, is still preserved in a

* "It is wonderful," says the archdeacon of St. David's, "how in such precipitate rapidity of the fingers the musical proportions are preserved, and by their art faultless throughout, in the midst of their complicated modulations and most intricate arrangement of notes, by a rapidity so sweet, an irregularity so regular, a concord so discordant. The melody is rendered perfect and harmonious whether the chords of the diapason or diapente are struck together; yet they always begin in a soft mode and end in the same, that all may be perfected in the sweetness of delicious sounds: then they enter on, and again leave their modulations, with much subtilty; and the tingling of the small strings sports with so much freedom under the deep notes of the bass, delights with so much

certain description of Irish song, where every note melodizes a word, and of which the fine old air of *Plai Racah na Rourk*, or O'Rourk's noble feast, is a very striking instance.*

So invariably do the Irish make the ear the path to the heart, so frequently is sound commingled with sentiment, and the affections of the mind with organic sensation, that even the prevailing superstition of the lower classes borrows much of its illusory creed from the exquisite sensibility of their ear; and supernatural sounds are not only devoutly believed, but always expected, as the herald of an important event, or singular incident. Death itself is predicted by the melanco-

delicacy, and soothes so softly, that the excellence of their art seems to lie in concealing it."

* Even the most rapid Irish air, when played slow, will be found to contain some lurking shade of pathos, and even to possess something of that melancholy luxury of sound which characterises the Arabian music.

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ly moan of the benshi;* and the heaviest curse that vengeance breathes upon the object of its direst hatred is, "the screech of the morning be upon you;"† a curse never to be heard without a thrill of horror and emotion.

The inordinate passion which the Irish have in all ages betrayed for music, must have eventually produced an eager pursuit of such means as would tend to its

* Mr. Walker ingeniously traces the origin of the benshi to the passing breeze brushing over the strings of the harp which the sorrowing bard hung up in the hall, on the death of his chief or patron.

† When the dawn rises for the first time on the remains of a beloved and deceased object, those feelings of sorrow which were till then faintly expressed, or silently betrayed, become wild and vehement in their indulgence; and the shriek of despair which ushers in the dawn's grey light to the bed of death, may indeed well be considered as an anathema by the ear and the heart on which it falls.

gratification. Musical instrument-makers are in fact to be found in many of the smallest towns of Ireland, and generally among men of the lowest professions. Some instances have come under my own observation, too singular to pass unnoticed.

In the town of Strabane, a poor man, originally a hedge-carpenter, obtained some degree of excellence in making violins and flutes, built a small organ, and was frequently called in by the most respectable families in the neighbourhood, to tune or mend piano-fortes, harpsichords, &c.

There is now resident in Dublin a young Connaught man, who works as a common carpenter, and who has made a small piano on which he performs, self-taught in the theory of music as in the construction of a musical instrument.

A remarkably fine toned organ with six stops has been lately placed in the Roman-catholic chapel at Mulingar—

built by a poor wheel-wright, a native of the town. He had commenced bagpipe-maker a few years before without any previous instruction, and shortly after completed a good piano-forte.

But the most striking and singular instance of this nature which this, or perhaps any other, country presents, is exhibited in the musical and mechanical talents of Mr. John Egan, the only pedal-harp maker in Ireland. Brought up from his earliest youth to the labours of the anvil, Mr. Egan was still serving his time to a smith, when chance threw in his way a French harp. A natural fondness for music, and the curiosity and admiration excited by a first view of the most beautiful and picturesque of all instruments, induced him to examine its machinery; and all the money he possessed in the world was shortly after laid out in the purchase of such materials as were requisite for the construction of a pedal harp, which he accomplished with so much success, as to find a high

and immediate sale for it. He is now very extensively engaged in the business, and may be ranked among the first of the profession in Great Britain.* His harps however have one fault, which though it does not influence the opinion of true judges, or prevent their exportation to Scotland, and even to parts of England, is a frequent barrier to their sale in Ireland, namely, that their maker is an Irishman.

* By an invention of which he has all the merit, he has so simplified the machinery, that the springs hitherto found necessary to return the pedals, he has laid aside; which renders the harp less liable to go out of order, much easier to repair, and enables the ingenious inventor to sell a pedal harp nearly one-half cheaper than it could be imported.

SKETCH XI.

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THE barony of Tyrerah is a remote tract of land, skirting the most romantic part of the coast of Sligo ; twenty-seven miles long, and sheltered by a continued chain of mountains, above whose varying elevation the “ cloud-capt ” summits of Knock-na-shoug, Knockna-chree and Nephin-noble, are conspicuously distinguished. The old traditions of the country assert, that the barony of Tyrerah, as well as that of Tyrawley, derived its name from Fion-maccumhal, or Fingal, the far-famed hero of Osian’s songs, as he stood on the summit of one of the Ox mountains, where he was devoting some days to the pleasures of the chase. My heart had long owed a pilgri-

mage to this remote, and, I believe, little-known barony; for it was the residence of the dear and respected friend for whom that heart had long throbbed with an invariable pulse of gratitude, tenderness, and affection. I had, indeed, long been anxious to indulge both my feelings, my curiosity and prevailing taste, by this visitation, which was eminently productive of the highest gratification to all.

The road which leads from the town of Sligo to Tyrerah is varying and romantic in its aspect, hanging over the sea-coast, and beneath the shelter of the loftiest mountains. The bay of Sligo, the fairy land of Hazlewood, the distant heights of Benbo and Benbulbin; the opposite shores of the bay, crowned with the majesty of Knock-na-ree; a partial view of the town of Sligo; and the woods which skirt the adjacent lakes; are caught, and lost, at intervals, amidst the devious windings of the road which passes directly through the village of Ballysadere. This little village lies on the

banks of a river which has its source in the mountains ; and forms in its rapid course, over a steep and unequal bed, a beautiful succession of water-falls, which wear the singular appearance of an aquatic amphitheatre. The rapid and repulsed stream breaks over rocks from point to point, for the space of more than two hundred yards ; till with congregated force it reaches the principal steep, which is upwards of fifteen feet perpendicular.

These romantic cataracts, when seen through the dark woods which once surrounded them, and with the full relief of Knock-na-ree in the rear, must have ranked amongst the noblest scenic features in the world. Over the deepest of the falls, and on the point of a little promontory, which appears flung between the confluence of the river and the bay, into which it pours its waters, hang the ruins of an abbey, founded by St. Fitchin in the seventh century. It afterwards belonged to the regular canons of St. Austin, and during the intolerant

persecutions carried on in this country in Elizabeth's day, the abbey, with all its revenues, was bestowed on Brian Fitzwilliam, who assigned it over to Edward Crofton, escheator-general of Ireland, and founder of the Crofton family in this province.* I understand—that, till within these few years, the abbey was in some degree of preservation, and a fragment of the town still remains, which exhibits some traces of good masonry. Near Ballyredon lies a lead-mine, which, though very rich, has never been worked with success; and Glanesk and Lockalt are but at an inconsiderable distance, while the luxurious island of Ylanabaolane, which forms the bay of Sligo, gives considerable interest

* Mr. Young asserts, that most of the gentlemen in this part of the country were Cromwell's soldiers, and many of them new settlers from Wales, as the Joneses, Morgans, Wynns, &c. &c. Many, however, of the descendants of the Milesian race are still to be found in it, and some among the most distinguished persons of the country, as the family of the O'Haras.

L

to a vein of scenery, which wants nothing but plantation to render it the most picturesque which imagination can devise, or nature present.

L*** house, the ancient family-seat of sir M*** C***n, bart. was the goal of my little journey, and I reached its venerable avenue at a season of the day peculiarly favourable to the soft *chiaroscuro* of picturesque beauty : with the old gloomy avenue of an ancient mansion-seat, there is, I think, invariably connected a certain sentiment which bears the heart back to "other times," and awakens it to an emotion of tender reverence, and melancholy pleasure. For myself, I have never walked beneath its interwoven branches uninfluenced by a certain feeling, in which memory's pensive spell mingled with the speculations of awakened fancy.

The lands and demesne of L*** lie almost along the shores of the Atlantic ocean, and immediately beneath the shel-

ter of Knockachree,* from whose rugged base swells the lesser chain of the Ox-mountains, whose sides were once covered with luxuriant woods, and from whose towering summit rush innumerable torrents, which lessening into streams in their deep descent, water the plains beneath, and flow into the ocean. The shores on the other side of the bay are romantic and striking; the beautiful peninsula of Tandsago intervenes its cultivated landscapes, and most happily breaks the view, while the rude dashing of the waves against the bar, lends an effective sound; and the back scenery afforded by the mountains, wears a character of wildness and sublimity, which finishes a picture that betrays no deficiency but from that want under which it labours in common with the rest of the country, the want of plantation.

Of the old castle of L*** nothing now remains but a few fragments that

* Knockachree, or the "hill of the heart," when measured from the shore, is supposed to be one of the highest mountains in Ireland.

mark its site, and are strewed amidst the vegetation which covers a cave, the probable asylum of many an unhappy fugitive in days of civil horror, or religious persecution. Near the spot where the castle once frowned, moulders the ruin of a small building, whose dilapidated portal still bears a Spanish inscription, intimating that it was the "retreat of a priest and his yellow-haired companion." It was in fact erected, as tradition asserts, by one of the lords of the castle, for his youngest son, who had in the Elizabethian day forfeited the revenues of an abbey of which he was superior; but whether the forfeiture arose from his attachment to popery, or the yellow-haired companion, oral history has preserved no record.

Near this retreat stands a small oratory or cell, furnished with a ruined altar, and some curiously carved heads of saints; while several fragments of rude sculpture and entablatures, with mottoes in Latin or Spanish, lie scattered around it.

In the traditional history of the barony, L * * * d holds a distinguished place. The castle, erected and long possessed by the O'Dowels, one of the most powerful families in Connaught, was besieged and taken by the clan of the Mac Swines; whose descendants in the reign of Elizabeth made it over, for a certain sum of money, with all the circumjacent lands, to Edward Crofton, an officer in Essex's army, and afterwards escheator-general of Ireland. That the lands of L * * * d were neither won by arms, nor seized on by licensed violence, from the original proprietors, is a circumstance well known to the neighbouring peasantry: one of them said to me, "L * * * d estate is not a debenture," which is a term applied to those properties made over by Cromwell to his soldiers: and the liberality of the escheator-general has added a kind of reverence to the affection and respect which his lineal descendant has awakened in the hearts of his tenants, dependants, and followers.*

* This term will only be understood in Ireland, where the "followers of the family" claim and receive the right of patronage, and too often of support and maintenance; it is a lingering custom of feudal times, which in many instances would be "more honoured in the breach than the observance."

END OF VOLUME I.

**PATRIOTIC
SKETCHES**

OF

IRELAND,

WRITTEN IN CONNAUGHT.

.....

BY MISS OWENSON.

.....

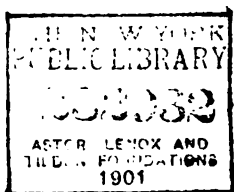
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1809.**



PATRIOTIC
SKETCHES,
&c.

.....

SKETCH XIII.

.....

ALTHOUGH the sun was hastening to his goal, pursued by gloomy masses of dark red clouds, that seemed "portentous of a storm," we were tempted a few evenings back to take a short ramble, which amply repaid us for the risk we voluntarily encountered.

The threatened inclemency, however, passed away in a few heavy drops: the air was soft and oppressive, and its tran-

quillity was only disturbed at distant intervals by sudden gusts of wind, which increased the dashing of the waves against the bar.

The mountains on the other side of the bay were veiled in deep blue mists, while the summits of those we approached were brightened by the slanting sunbeam, which shot its sacred light from the watery clouds on which it seemed to repose. As we proceeded through a deep-entangled dell, I was struck by the forcible contrast presented to my eye, by two cabins, which lay close to each other; the one wretched and ruinous, was raised with mud, and thatched with sods; the other well built, and almost picturesque in its appearance, displayed all the neat comforts of an English cottage. Mr. **** offered to account for the disparity; but observing a decent looking old man seated at the door of the better residence, he added, "Here is one, an old tenant and workman of my father's, whose information on the subject will be more grateful to you than mine

can possibly be." The old man now approached us, and with that courtesy which invariably distinguishes the manners of the peasantry of this country, he requested us to walk in and rest ourselves, adding, the cow had just been milked, if we would condescend to take a draught of new milk.

We found within the cabin his old dame seated at her wheel, and a young girl busied at some flax. She was pretty, and on enquiry I found she was not their daughter, but a little orphan they had adopted. "Poor thing, said the old man, looking affectionately at her, she has got a disorder in her arm, which is wasting her away sadly." Mr. **** advised him to take her to an hospital in the neighbourhood. "God bless her," returned the old man, "I would take her all over the world, if it would do her any good;" and yet he had a family of his own, and the little orphan had no other claim on his kindness than that of standing in need of it.

I now inquired into the cause of that evident disparity of circumstances which apparently existed between him and his neighbour, and was glad to hear that the ruinous cabin was uninhabited. "That miserable hut," said he, "was my own poor home for twelve years ; for, never being able to get a lease from the gentleman who stood between me and the head landlord, his honour's father there, Christ bless him, my heart failed me, as to doing any thing in the way of improvement; knowing that if I did, my poor boys might be turned out, and a stranger come and reap the fruits of our labour : so I went plodding on from year to year, heartless enough, taking an acre here to-day, and there to-morrow, to sow our potatoes and flax in. But no sooner had the lands got back into his honour's hands, my blessing light on him, than he gave us a lease that will stand good for my children and my children's children ; and then our spirits got up, and we worked night and day, and improved this little farm, and built this comfortable cabin,

which it is worth while to keep neat and clean ; and though I never saw twenty guineas of my own together in all my life, there is not a happier man in the barony for all that."

This little detail shed another ray of light upon those popular discontents which have so long agitated this country, and which have been invariably attributed to an inimicality on the part of the Irish peasant to the British government.

The copyhold lease is unknown in Ireland ; and neither the equity nor the heart of the middle-man acknowledges those claims which the affection of the child makes on the little spot dear to the earliest feelings of his soul, and reclaimed and cultivated by the hands of his father.

We now proceeded along a narrow and neglected path, partially shaded by a thicket, and which gradually wound up the brow of a rugged hill, whose sum-

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mit was crowned with the ruins and cemetery of the abbey of Drumard. As the abbey had received a particular benediction from one of the popes, it is still looked on as a kind of passport to salvation, by the neighbouring peasantry, to be buried in its consecrated ground; and many a snowy garland, and flowery wreath, identified the "narrow house" of some recently lost, or tenderly lamented object. The gloom of evening was thickening; from the eminence where we stood, the sea, dark and turbulent, was heard to roar. I sat down on a tomb among the ruins of the abbey; and the tone of my mind, though mournful, was not ungracious to my fancy or my feelings. At that moment a young peasant entered the cemetery, and having chased away a mule who was grazing on its skirts, he took off his hat, and approaching Mr. *** with a melancholy air, said, "that he had followed his honour, in the hope of relieving his heart of a great weight, for that it was nigh to break when he beheld the beasts of the field disturbing the remains of his poor father

and mother, owing to the fences of the burial-ground being all removed or broken down, so that at last the whole church-yard would become pasture; and all this," added he, "for want, an please your honour, of mending that ruined wall which served as a parting between it and the parson's lands. For my own part, I would rather fast for a week, and give up my labour towards rebuilding the wall, than to see the remains of my poor parents disturbed by mules, and horses, and pigs; and if your honour will but allow me to take stones and sand from your honour's quarry, I will engage to build up the wall myself in three days, without either assistance or reward."—

This disinterested request was instantly complied with, and with blessings on his tongue, and satisfaction in his eyes, the young peasant departed; stooping to pluck away a thistle from the grave of his parents as he passed it,* with a look

* I afterwards learnt that he had actually carried the stones on his back from a considerable distance, with which he had built up the walls of the cemetery.

full of self-satisfaction, and delighted to make a temporary resignation of the means of livelihood, by which he should secure the ashes of his departed parents from violation.

The affectionate regard which the Irish peasant feels for the memory of those dear to him in life, is indeed romantic, and almost incredible. "Here," said Mr. ****, pointing to a tomb-stone—"here is a curious instance of the love of posthumous honours prevailing among the lower orders of this country. The person whose death, &c. &c. this grave-stone is to relate, superintended the carriage of it here to-day himself, and actually chose the spot where he wished to be interred. He was a poor farmer in delicate health; and probably purchased the means of perpetuating his memory after death, by the denial of many comforts requisite to the prolongation of his life."

This circumstance brought mutually to our remembrance many anecdotes il-

lustrative of the predominant passion of the lower Irish, to hold an endeared immortality in the hearts of their surviving friends. In the poems of Ossian many allusions are made to this so ignoble propensity ; and the bard who anxiously exclaims, “ Oh ! lay me near my favorite hills, ye that see the light,” &c. &c. seems to have been animated by the same desire as the peasant of the present day, who watches with anxiety the progress of his tomb, and marks the spot which is to receive his ashes.

Not many months back, a labouring man was tried in an assize-town in this province, and condemned to die ; but betraying a hardened insensibility to his fate, even while sentence was passing on him, the judge endeavoured to awaken some “ compunctious visitings of conscience” in his unrepenting breast, by declaring that he should suffer in forty-eight hours. “ Forty-eight hours !” reiterated the condemned with a smile of contempt ; “ in forty-eight minutes if you

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will, so that my body is but given to my people."

It is a circumstance well known in the neighbourhood of Tereragh, that during the late rebellion a man was tried and condemned for disaffection, to whom it was offered to have his sentence of death changed into transportation, if he would make some discoveries. After some consultation, however, with his wife and family, he sent for the officer of the guard, and told him he was ready for execution. "We must all die, please your honour," said he calmly, "sooner or later; for my part, thank God! I am sure of dying in the midst of my people — Many a tear will be dropt, and many a song sung over me, and my children's children will talk of my wake and my funeral. But if I go into foreign parts, though I save my life for a time, I must die at last; and die among strangers, without one friend to close my eyes, or to watch the morning light shining for the first time on my corpse." His wife, who was present, wept; but confirmed

him in his resolution, and the next day he was executed.

A passion for enjoying a twofold existence, independent of actual being ; of tracing back genealogical honours, and anticipating a perpetuated life in the hearts of those they leave behind ; is a passion incidental to the native Irish character of every rank ; and though in the world's language it may be deemed a romantic passion, yet romance, like heroism, is never the national *trait* of a corrupt or base people : it may be found in the character of an Aristides ; it may be traced in the conduct of a Scevola, but it will not be easily discovered in the slaves of modern Greece, or found in the natives of modern Rome.

The last rays of the setting sun had withdrawn their glow from the ruins of Drumard, and were succeeded by a clear twilight, animated by the brightness of a rising moon. We were on the point of returning to L*** house, which was little more than half a mile distant across a

field-path, when a partial view of a *holy well* caught as we descended the brow of the hill, and tempted us to a little pilgrimage aside, for it lay almost in our way to L*** house. We directed our steps therefore to a glen, through which a stream meandered its irregular way, over a rude bed of rock, which produced an incessant murmur in its impeded course. A little circular spot sacred to religious gloom, and shaded with sycamores and elms, terminated the glen: its entrance was constructed of a rude arch, and the flag which formed its threshold was thrown over the stream, which had doubtless been the rubicon of faith to many an all-believing soul. In the centre of this consecrated spot stood a round stone bath, which received its tributary waters from the adjoining sacred spring; which was simply covered with a broad flat stone, raised over it longitudinally. A path was traced round the holy well, which seemed to have been "worn by holy knees," and a small bowl suspended over it by a chain, many a holy lip had doubtless pressed, and haply fancied

that it quaffed salvation with a draught. At some little distance from the bath and well stood a simple altar, enriched with stones, and shaded by a spreading oak, from whose trunk was hung a wooden crucifix, and on whose branches were thrown the votive offerings of those whose "faith had made them whole," while the names of the pious convalescents were carved on its bark.

Religion, in her deepest mood of solemn meditation, could not have chosen a spot more congenial to the indulgence of her spiritual abstraction. The gloomy sequestration of the place, the purposes to which it was devoted, the rude simplicity of its aspect, the sweet solemnity of the hour, the oppressive softness of the atmosphere, and the stilly sounds that breathed on the silence of the evening, gave a combined and touching interest to the scene; and if I were to judge by my own feelings, it required no predisposition to fanaticism, to resign, in such a spot and in such an hour, the soul to the influence of sacred emotion, and

by a "soft transition mingle with the skies."

Such a temple as this must ever be accordant to the simplicity of primitive religion, where heaven forms the canopy, and nature furnishes the altar; where all inspires enthusiasm, unaccompanied by the fury of sect, and all breathe the ardour of devotion, unalloyed by that venality to which devotion is so frequently prey; when credulous vice hopes to "bribe the wrath of ill-requited heaven," and pious Fraud affects to cancel the sin, and laughs while he profits by the folly of the sinner.

Superstition is the religion of weak minds; but the superstition which the simple, the romantic solemnity of this little spot awakened, was the orthodox of the fancy and the heart.

I left it with regret; and we again found ourselves in the gloomy little glen; the sea-breeze rushed sharply through it, and our approach to the shore was mark-

ed by the change of atmosphere, which was now sharp and cold ; and we were luxuriating in the idea of a warm drawing-room and good fire, when a shivering little girl appeared driving a sorry horse, laden with turf, in the narrow and almost impassible defile which we were struggling through ; she did not appear above ten years old, and was literally half-naked.

With the idle curiosities incident to ramblers, we asked her some questions, which she answered in Irish ; and we learnt that she was the eldest child of a poor widow, who lived on the other side of the hill we had descended ; she was the only one of four children able to work, “ and was then,” she said, “ returning home after getting some turf off Lawrence Hogan’s bog, Patrick Flanagan having lent his horse out of charity to draw it.” “ And Mr. Lawrence Hogan,” said Mr. ***, “ is liable to a penalty for giving turf in this manner off the bog ; and Mr. Patrick Flanagan has been idle all day for the want of his horse ;

but one half of the poor of this country would perish were it not for the benevolence and brotherly assistance of the other." The little shivering girl curtsied, and passed on towards the mountain. How few are the hardships to which the females of this country are not innured from their infancy !

By the time we had reached the old avenue of L*** house, the moon rode high, and darted her beams through the foliage of the trees that canopied our heads, while opposed to her cold but brilliant light the deep red blaze of a turf fire gleamed through the "loop-hole" of a neighbouring cabin. The song which caught our ear as we passed the door induced us to enter. It was the song of an itinerant taylor ; he was seated in the centre of the earthen floor, working by the light of a rush, and surrounded by a group of children, who were hanging delightedly on his song ; and watching with eagerness the progress of the little frieze jackets, spun by their mother, and now in the hands of the musical taylor, while

their parents, released from the labours of hire, were working by the light of the moon in their little garden; and their eldest brother, submitting to the influence of inordinate fatigue, lay stretched on some straw in a corner of the cabin, the head of a calf actually reposing on his arm, and the parent cow quietly slumbering at his feet. A more striking picture of the interior of an Irish cabin could not be given.

Notwithstanding a certain quaint humour in the wandering taylor, who entered with some degree of droll freedom into conversation with us, and the beauty of the children strikingly apparent even in their ragged attire, the clouds of smoke which thickened round us drove us almost immediately away.

SKETCH XIII.

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THERE are not only picturesque forms, picturesque scenes, and picturesque sounds, on which the fancy loves to dwell; but even the weather has its picturesque beauty, and every season of the day "its charm peculiar :—" which to a poetic imagination never loses a certain interest, and communicates to every object something of its own character. Thus while the genius of a Lorraine basked in the red rich beams of a declining sun, the fancy of a Salvator wooed the gloomy shadows of the midnight storms. Thus the East's chill blasts, or South's soft breeze, the thunder's prelusive cloud, or day's meridian ray, communicates to the human frame a sensation correspondent

to their effects ; which reacting on the feeling and the mind, submits to the influence of material causes, the essence of the immaterial being.

“ So the glad impulse of congenial powers,
Or of sweet sound, or fair-proportion'd form,
The grace of motion, or the *bloom of light*,
Thrills through imagination's tender frame :
From nerve to nerve, all naked and alive,
They catch the spreading ray till now the soul
At length discloses every tuneful spring
To that harmonious movement from without
Responsive.”

Human knowledge has its source in human wants ; and he who first made meteorology his study, was perhaps like me, dependant on the vicissitudes of the weather for his occupation and his pleasures.

A ramble among some fine mountain scenery having been proposed, we left L*** house early in the morning on our pedestrian tour ; although the apparently doubtful temper of the day almost held

determination in suspense, while it possessed the same degree of fascination as the dotage of love is apt to discover in the half-pouting, half-smiling caprice of a whimsical mistress. The mellowed tone of spirits under which my last Sketch was drawn, when the soft gloom of an autumnal evening hung its pensive shadows round me, was now, by the sweetness of an autumnal morning, animated into that flow of animal and intellectual vivacity which flings on the opening scenes of nature a prismatic hue,

“ And before us turns
The gayest, happiest attitude of things.

As we emerged from the venerable avenue, the elevation of the road into which we advanced gave to our glance a full view of the ocean; its bosom smooth and unruffled sparkled to the radiance of an almost vertical sun; while the bar resisting the tide's swelling ebb, flung back the stealing wave in snowy breakers. High above our winding path the Ox-mountains arose like an amphitheatre,

and spreading their undulating line towards the County of Letrim, lost their distant summits in the golden clouds that reposed on them, while on the opposite shore the solitary majesty of Knock-na-ree settled its lofty brow.

As we paused to contemplate a scene rich in some of the finest features of the picturesque sublime, a young peasant approached us: he seemed like the hereditary bards of his country, “formed in the prodigality of nature;” and though “he whistled as he went,” if the intelligence of his countenance was to be credited, it was not “for want of thought.” This,” said Mr.***, who accompanied us, “is an *a propos* recontre; for this is the young fellow I mentioned to you, who has obtained so much celebrity among his rustic friends for singing the songs of Ossian; and in fact, after a few words of conversation with him, we discovered he was on his way to attend a wake seven miles for that purpose. Mr.*** asked him if he would come and

sing the songs of Ossian for us at L*** house ; he replied, with a bow and a blush “ that he did not think he could, not being used to sing before such company ; ” adding, that “ he was sure he could not make himself understood in English, as the songs were in such fine old *cramp* Irish, that few (save the old people) could understand them ; and that though he *felt* all he sung, he could not himself explain it, so as to *hit his fancy*.” In a word he gave us to understand, that the songs had descended orally in the pure ancient Irish, which, like every other polished language, had its classical and vulgar dialects.

At my particular instance, the young story-teller (for so he was named) repeated some stanzas from Ossian in a species of recitative not unmusical : it was an account of Fingal’s combat with the Danish monarch ; and while he recited the combat with some degree of epic fire, he pointed to a mountain sacred to some of the feats of his hero, and thus

gave a superadded interest to his "song of other times."

It is now I believe generally allowed by those whose attention has been fascinated by the subject, that the Ossianic poems are not more ancient than the eleventh and twelfth centuries; as many of the terms of language found in them must have been unknown to the early Irish: they are even now given in an almost obsolete dialect, though still in that short measure which was formerly sung to the harp by the Irish lyrists.

The pertinacity with which the Irish adhere to their ancient customs and manners, in almost every instance, is strongly illustrated in this; our young story-teller being in fact a representative of a certain order of "bardis," of whom Spenser gives so curious an account.—Speaking of the higher order of minstrels he says,* "their verses were taken up with general applause, and sung

* Vol. vi. small edition.

at all feasts and meetings, by certain other persons whose function that is, and who receive for the same great rewards and reputation among them." * In a latter period however, this *musique ambulante* seems to have declined in its influence, as did its professors in respectability; for we find one of them thus described by Sir William Temple: "A very gallant gentleman of the north of England," says he, "has told me of his own experience, that in his wolf-huntings

* "The Scotch, Welsh, and Irish, though the countries they inhabit have been much subject both to foreign aggression and intestine wars, yet contain more of their aboriginal inhabitants, and are at this day a less mixed race than the English. They have still in some measure retained in popular use their peculiar dialects, handed down to them from remote ages. They converse in their own language with a conscious delight, and have preserved many of their ancient customs, institutions, traditions, and pastimes, and also many of their metrical compositions."—*Preston on the Origin and Progress of the Fine Arts.*

there, when he used to be abroad in the mountains three or four days together, and lay very ill at nights, so that he could not sleep, they would bring him one of the tale-tellers ; that when he lay down would begin a story of a king, or a giant, or a dwarf, or a damsel, or such rambling stuff, and continue it all night long, in such an even tone, that you heard it going on whenever you awakened."

Mr. Walker traces the origin of romantic fabling in Ireland to an Oriental source ; not however through so remote a medium as the Milesian settlers in this country, but through those catholic missionaries deputed occasionally from Rome to regulate the ritual, and who probably introduced among their supplies of holy legends, many profane romances, the wild off-spring of visionary fancies and monastic indolence ; and as the brilliant fictions of the East were the elements of which these romances were composed, " they thus," Mr. Walker asserts, " obtained a footing in Ireland, and

furnished materials for the metrical tales of our early bards."

I have however met with some ancient Irish compositions which did not wear the character of Oriental poetry, and certainly rose far beyond the "rambling stuff" alluded to by Temple. I shall select a translation of one as an instance.

Scene, near Galway.

"Now sleeps the breeze of night on the moon-shattered wave, and the kindling azure of rosy morn invites my steps to the ocean's brim ; its murmer soothes my care ; a ship at a distance (stately as a swan on the rising surge) salutes my eye ; the swelling sail courts the passing air ; quickly she reaches the pebbled shore ; her lading precious holds the attentive sight captive ; the richest silks of Greece in folds loose floating rise, or sinking beam each various die that woofs the fluid bow ; while precious stones that thirsty-seeming drink the light gleam brightly round. But soon my wandering

soul is fixed on one fair object issuing from the bark, milder than day descending on the plain ; behind her flows a train of snowy virgins, in movements gentle and in air divine ; but she that train outshines as Hesper does his twinkling host, while her untainted mind beams through her form, diffusing smiles that soften every thought, and tune to sighs of love each passing gale ; her wavy locks in parting radiance fall adown her lessening waist, while shining rings of happy gold embrace her snowy neck ; the infant blushes of the dewy rose light kiss her cheek ; her scarcely parting lip delays the milky dawn. Now various thoughts of contemplation rise—What can the errand of this angel mean ? for nothing less I deemed the beautiful form of Peggy Deane. O fairest star of beauty's spreading sky ! O beautiful swan, that swelling on the sight dissolves in luxury the sinking soul ! O beautiful nymph with teeth of polished snow ! O sweetest branch of an illustrious race, whose deeds have often swelled the eternal song, and fed the poet's flame ! O voice

of love, whose melting tones new accents to the listening harp impart! at thy dear presence the sun enfeebled grows, his beams soft sinking shew thy flowing hair that richer glows than his. Thrice happy man! oh, happiest he of men, who dares thy presence soft approach, hang on thy look, melt at thy touch, or waste his soul for thee in sighs! O too enchanting look, that early spreads its soft persuasion o'er my heart, that dimmed mine eyes, and won me first to verse; much fairer than Cassandra's form, than Helen of the winning mein, or Dian chaste, or Grainia, soft-eyed maid,* or Deirdra mild, that with her lover Naoise fled to Alban's shore from Ulster's king, her spouse whose beauty, hapless fate, and lawless flame, have often swelled the poet's reed! Yes, thou art fairer far than she; and yet thy glowing charms await unsung: in vain the lily offers for thy neck, the rose-bud for thy cheek, or blossoms for thy hair. Thy waist is gentler than the

* A celebrated Irish beauty and heroine in the reign of Elizabeth.

weasel's, and thy song's melody would chase the stroke of death; my heart incessant bleeds from wounds thine eyes have made! I feel my soul dissolve in sighs, and I am shrunk like flowers that mourn the absence of the sun. I'm like the solitary fowl on evening's purple wave; thy breath alone can warm me, for thy breath is sweeter than the breath of morn. In vain I fly, still thou persuest: in solitude I meet thy presence, and in a crowd I am alone: imagination loves to dwell upon thee; thy hair long and spreading is drawn from love's own net; the rose and lily still dispute thy cheek; thy accent soft fades like the accent of the melting string; and thine eye's beam ---oh! happy he who flies that beam, yet hapless he!!!"

We had scarcely taken leave of our young story-teller, whose accidental rencontre has led me into this digression, when a sudden shower obliged us to seek shelter in a cabin near the shore; though little better than a mud built hut, it was

singularly clean, and we found its mistress (an elderly dame) busied in preparing dinner for her sons, who were at work. The feast consisted of some potatoes and milk, of which we were courteously solicited to partake. In the course of some little chit-chat, she took occasion to complain to Mr.**** of the oppression she suffered from her landlord; and having mentioned the exorbitant rent she paid for her cabin, added with a look and a manner I shall never forget: "Surely it is too much to pay for *a shed to break one's heart under!*" So energetic, so expressive is the Irish language, that those of the lower order, who borrow the idiom of their English from that of their native tongue, frequently say more in a single sentence than volumes could express.* "Your absence is ever present to me;" "the light of heaven has taken shelter in your eye;" "pulse

* "The Irish tongue is sharp and sententious," says Stainhurst, "and offereth great occasions to quick apothegms and proper allusions."

of my beating heart ;” and many other equally tender expressions of endearment, I have heard them frequently use to each other ; and indeed, were Love to draw up a nomenclature of his own technical phrases, the Irish language would perhaps contribute more largely to the undertaking than any other whatever.

SKETCH XIV.

.....

As novelty affords to the senses and the mind one of the liveliest gratifications of which either is susceptible, that system which still retains its gloss, that mode which still preserves its sanction, whether founded in truth or originating in error, still holds its patent from the passions of mankind, and is neither to be opposed with effect, nor resisted with success, till the acumen of experience has detected its fallacy, or till it becomes uninteresting by becoming stale ; while that which has for its best recommendation the charm of novelty only, must owe the sanction of universal adoption to the same variable and fluttering power to which it stood indebted for its first intro-

duction. Whether the "new light" in farming so eagerly embraced in many parts of Ireland, owes its influence to its novelty or to its intrinsic excellence, it is for those to judge who can form their estimate from experienced proof. But how far this country has been benefited morally, politically or physically, by the increased weight of its sirloins, the additional rotundity of its hogs, or the delicate ossific construction of its sheep, is a circumstance of which I candidly plead the most perfect ignorance.

But while the silver vase or golden medal shines at the board, or glitters at the breast of him who has enriched his country with the fattest bullock, or ennobled it with the largest hog, is there no prize for him whose heart, swelling indignant at the obvious degradation of his humble compatriot brethren, exerts the best energies of his being to raise them in the scale of human nature and national interest? for him who indignantly beholding that

“Man’s the only growth that withers here,”

boldly comes forward as the champion of those, from whose minds even habitual wretchedness has not obliterated the noblest traces of humanity; who endeavours to extend towards them the means of labour, and consequently of subsistence; who adequately rewards their exertions, and voluntarily lends his individual efforts to that redress of long and existing grievance which can alone chase the scowl of latent insurrection from the close-knit brow of popular feeling, and awaken the cheery smile of heartfelt contentment in the downcast eye of habitual despondency.

I am told that many characters of high respectability, and some political influence in this country, undisturbed by national conflict, unambitious of legislative power, devote all their faculties to the improvement of such implements of husbandry as may eventually annihilate the necessity of all manual labour, and like the flying chase of Bacon, or the magic

cap of Fortunatus, execute the intention of their possessors without the troublesome intervention of human aid or animal assistance;* that others, distinguished by their elevated rank in society, meekly devote themselves to the *bienséance* of a piggery, and endeavour to regulate the “*petits morales*” of its occupants by the new light of agricult-

* In a country swarming with population, chiefly devoted to pasturage, and inhabited by a bold, active, and restless peasantry, the good policy of torturing mechanical skill to devise new modes of lessening the necessity of human labour, is not very clear to minds who are apt to judge of causes by their effects, and to estimate an invention rather by its utility than its ingenuity.—“*Le public ne prend jamtis conseil que de son intérêt, & ne proportionne point son estime pour les differens genres de l'esprit à l'inégale difficulté de ces genres, c'est-à-dire au nombre & à la finesse des idées nécessaire ; pour y reussir, mais seulement à l'avantage plus ou monis grand qu'il en retire.*”—*De l'Esprit, par Rapport au Public*, c. 12. p. 89.

ral philosophy ;* and that many who unite opulence to rank, emulate the propensities and avocations of their own blacksmith, and on the splendid domains of their ancestors preside over the sale of newly-invented harrows and patent ploughs.†

But while the regimen of cattle has become an object of fashionable attention, *who*, by an adequate reward of industry,

“ Grants a bliss at labour’s earnest call,”

*An Irish gentleman distinguished by his farming enthusiasm, invented a trough of peculiar construction, to induce the pigs to eat with *propreté* ; failing in the attempt, I heard him seriously declare that there was a radical principle of filth in the animal, which neither care nor education could vanquish.

† Attendant on these vast machines, and attached to the farms of these patrician farmers, a number of English hinds, imported to superintend the farms, are to be seen, who, well dressed, well fed, and well paid, insult by their

and adds to the potatoe and salt of his peasant the luxury of one of the turnips sown for his sheep? While some degree of elegance is betrayed in the construction of a bullock-stall or a pig-stye, *who* raises the walls or secures the roof of the miserable cabin, which, covered with a few turf sods, subjects its shivering inhabitants to all "the penalties of Adam, the seasons' changes?" While vehicles of comfort and of ease are provided to convey the pampered animal from the soil that nourishes it, to the market where it is to enrich its owner's purse, *who* feels for those whose wretched drapery defends not the form it scarcely covers from the weather's inclemency, for those whose torn and perished feet so often track the winter's snows with their naked pressure?

It is in vain to assert that by the population of Ireland exceeding the necessity of human labour, the wretchedness

presence the natives of the soil, and by contrast and comparison teach them to feel their own degraded state with keener susceptibility.

of the lower orders is become an inevitable evil ; while immeasurable tracts of bog, whose reclaiming would afford subsistence to many hundred families, are suffered to lie undrained, to impure and corrupt the climate, and to injure and deform the aspect of the country ;* while

* The promotion of public good must ever in some degree flow back in an inverse ratio on those whose individual exertions have tended to that promotion ; and I was so forcibly struck by the proprietors of bogs slumbering over the aggrandizement of their own properties, that I applied for a solution of the enigma to a gentleman of considerable landed property and agricultural experience ; who replied, “ that the preliminary step to render a bog productive was to drain it, which was best effected by subdividing it into roads ; but that the inability of the small adjacent baronies to undertake so great a work was in general the chief obstacle. It was alone to be accomplished by becoming an object of general attention, by the unanimity and confederate efforts of a county at large to give presentments ; in a word, the influence and exertion of public spirit, blended with the individual principles of private interest.” The

those numerous rivers in which the island abounds, sharing that general neglect of all public concerns, interwoven with the intrinsic and internal interest of the country, are suffered to overflow their banks to a vast extent ; whose timely confinement within their natural shoals would rescue many thousand acres of now unproductive land, from decided loss, and give employment to many thousand wretches, whom want of work and not want of principle drives to desperation.

Incapable from my sex, my years, my inexperience, to judge how far the natural, political, or commercial state of my native country admits of the introduction and establishment of manufactories ; it is yet impossible I should cast my eyes on those vast bogs which spread their savage plains till the horizon limits

Dublin Society, I understand, give premiums for crops off bogs, for the obtainment of which a few partial efforts by certain individuals are made ; but if the premiums were offered for

their extent to the strained eye ;* it is impossible I should behold those numerous and noble rivers whose too abundant waters cover† the most naturally

the draining of bogs, would or would not the effects be more general, and more extensively beneficial ?

* The partial reclamation to be seen on the skirts of some bogs, testifies the latent capabilities of the whole. Speaking of a bog at Wordlawn, the seat of Lord Ashtown, and of the proprietor's mode of improving it, Mr. Young in his travels through Ireland asserts, that the bog in its original state was "like a bed of tow," unable to sustain the pressure of a horse's foot, from the lightness of its substance, and so wet that the drains could not be at first cut deeper than four feet ; yet he adds, that he afterwards saw it in such perfect improvement, that its hay was fine, its herbage good, and it carried the complete appearance of a meadow, except in the drains, where the heath still appeared.

† This perhaps would be most effectually obviated by the interference of the legislature, obliging the proprietors of the circumjacent

luxurious soil, without a conviction striking my heart, that, in the remedy of those natural but injurious defects, lurk employment for the industrious, competency for the impoverished, riches for the individual, and beauty, health, and prosperity, for the country in general.

Oh! surely it requires no new light to discover that the happiness of a people constitutes the prosperity of a nation; that neither the improved beauty of her animals, nor the partial luxuriancy of her soil, can secure her internal felicity, or add lustre to her reputation, while circumstances of a peculiar but not evitable nature repress the energy and limit the

lands to contribute to a work of such private and public utility, according to their respective tenures. The idea, however, is the suggestion of an inexperienced mind, guided by the enthusiasm of its wishes, in every thing that concerns the good of that country where its first ideas were awakened into existence, and cradled amidst circumstances of national interest.

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faculties of her children ; while poverty swallows the check of her sons, and discontent sits lowering on their brows ; while the bold hand of religious distinction flings its ice upon the ardent feelings of national confederacy ; and the baneful influence of party-spirit severs those hearts, whose unanimous coalition would form round the green shores of their native island, a barrier impregnable to the force of foreign invasion, invulnerable to the arts of foreign seduction. To him then whose every energy tends to the promotion of that great object be the prize of national honour adjudged ; round his heart whose strongest feeling is his country's good, be that medal suspended, which, warm from the mint of national gratitude, his country's hand presents. For such is the man to whom monarchs should decree their honours ; such is the man to whom nations should erect their statues.

SKETCH XV.

.....

THE precipice of Alt-bo is a shrine to which all the votaries of the "terrible graces" of nature should bend their pilgrim steps.

——— *This no little hill,*
 No sloping upland lifting to the sun.
 Stone mountain this, desolate rock on rock;
The burthen of the earth.

From the window of my apartment at L*** house, the extreme point of Alt-bo incessantly caught my eye, and so frequently have I heard its wild and desolate features exalted above the other natural sublimities of the neighbourhood, that unable to wait upon the tardy de-

parture of damp and gloomy weather, I prevailed on the indulgent associates of many of my little rambles to accompany me to this master-piece of magnificent but savage nature. The morning was chill, light showers fell at intervals, and as the road which leads to Alt-bo is so perilous and intricate as to be inaccessible to any vehicle, we were obliged to perform our little pilgrimage on horseback. As we proceeded, that bold ridge of mountain which towers above the narrow plains of Tyrerah, spread its undulating lines to the left, blue with the mists of morning, and dashing from its cloudy heights streams which the rain had swelled to torrents. To the right, the mountains of Donegal appeared like vapours staining the horizon. The road narrow, devious, and sometimes almost impassable, frequently gave to our eyes the most wretched huts, whose half-naked inhabitants the sound of our horses' feet occasionally brought to their doors, giving a moral finish, not to a scene of characteristic wildness, but of comfort-

less desolation. The ocean at last abruptly broke upon our view, and presented the noblest, though certainly the wildest coast I had ever beheld; the rock-scenery and windings of the coast equally defying the pencil or the pen to detail the features they daringly betrayed.

As we reached the shore, the tide was going out; yet as we crossed the sands beneath the umbrage of

“ Rocks inaccessible,
And summits that tired the eagle’s wing,”

the agitated ocean drove its mountainous billows back, as if to threaten destruction on those who thus intruded on the boundaries of its awful and treacherous empire. Almost bathed by the spray of the tide, which opposing winds thus flung back, we took advantage of a defile worn through rocks by the incursion of the waves, with some difficulty ascended the precipitous heights, and at last gained

the summit of those savage cliffs which a short time before we had strained our eyes to gaze at.

We now continued, and with great difficulty, to follow the narrow path which was sometimes tracked along the edge of a precipice, sometimes wound through a desolated heath, and sometimes ran along the rocks which skirted the coast, until we at last reached the edge of a torrent which, flowing from the mountains that rose on our left, plunged into the ocean with a fathomless fall. Here, amidst the acclivities of the rocks, appeared a few fishing huts, called in Irish "the village of the cliffs;" while among some boats drawn up from the shore, one of a better description was distinguished by the title of the admiral-boat, and belonged to the chief or leader of this little piscatory colony. We obtained this intelligence from some young men, natives of the savage soil, and in their deportment free as the winds that visited it. It was Sunday, and they were amus-

ing themselves on the rocks ; their feet and heads were uncovered, though the wind blew keenly from the ocean, and the warm and almost impregnable covering we had provided ourselves with, was unable to resist the occasional attacks of the " pitiless storm."

They however seemed perfectly unconscious of its effects ; and their apparent insensibility to the "jar of elements," and their tall, robust, and hardy figures, were finely in point with the rude scenery around them ; while their civilized address, and evident courtesy, evinced the little influence which mere situation can produce on manners. They entreated us to rest in their huts, offered to be our guides, and when we thankfully refused their attention, promised to take care of our horses, which now ceased to be of any use to us. The immediate path to Alt-bo, by which we now proceeded, was indeed barely passable to the human foot: sometimes the marshy soil sunk beneath the pressure of our

steps ; sometimes high mounds of earth were to be surmounted, deep ditches got over, and not unfrequently the savage and irregular cliffs, darting abruptly into the ocean, rendered the head giddy while the timid and uncertain foot pursued the track marked along their towering summits. It was from the extreme points, and angular direction, of these cliffs, that we sometimes obtained a view of those immense grottoes, and yawning caverns, which vaulted their lofty heads, hung with sea-weed, and embossed with shells and maritime shrubs ; and where the pent up winds and incursive waves occasioned such an incessant war of elements, that fancy, resting her wandering eye upon the terrific excavations, might well consider them as the palladium of the spirit of the storms. Some scattered pieces of wreck floated near ;* and at the entrance of one was anchored a fishing-boat, which marked the ad-

* The coast is reckoned fatal by mariners, and many vessels are frequently lost on it during the winter season.

venturous spirit of him that dared to guide it to so perilous a mooring.

Above the most awful of these caves, and high over all its savage competitors, towers the cliff which bears the name of Alt-bo. With hesitating steps and dazzled eyes we approached its highest point. The ocean roaring at its shelvy base, which indeed seemed "fixed in the world's foundation," spread before the eye in all the grandeur of infinitude; while the mountain scenery of Tyrerah rose in full relief to the left, and to the right swelled the savage summits of the Rosses, which skirted the opposite shores of Donegal, and the island of Innis-murry lifted its green head midway amidst the surrounding waves. At some distance from Alt-bo, the abyss of Coradun presents an object never to be viewed without an emotion of terror; and if the source of the true sublime consists in that which excites ideas of pain and danger, and operates on the mind in a manner analogous to terror, the sublimest object I

have ever beheld is the abyss of Coradun. High and bold as the precipice of Alt-bo, its black and rocky sides seemed to have been wrenched asunder by some great convulsion of nature; while the noise of the ocean rushing through the mighty chasm, though its "earth-shaking roar comes deadened up," falls on the ear like subterraneous thunder. Even the shrill scream of the numerous flocks of sea-fowl, which from its summit appear like flies swarming at its base, is but faintly caught at intervals, when urging their rapid wings, they reach its altitude half way, and spent and exhausted by the soaring effort, sink on the waves beneath.

If any sounds can be said to be sublime, those which reached my ear as I tremblingly hung over the abyss of Coradun, may surely arrogate the character; for though the sentiment of sublimity belongs more properly to the affections of the mind than to mere organic sensation, yet who has not felt that there is in sound "some sympathy with souls," and

that the one may be “not touched but rapt, not wakened but inspired,” by the influence of the other? Oh! never can that effect be obliterated from my recollection, which was produced on my fancy and my feelings, by the deep roar of waters in the narrow confines of Coradun, and by the wildly magnificent scenery amidst whose savage grandeur I heard it: often will the memory of that moment return, when my mind, all its motions suspended between admiration and horror, became the victim of imagination; and overwhelmed by a sense of my fancied danger, I rushed precipitately from the awful brow of Coradun, with such a feeling of vague and doubtful pleasure, as the consciousness of sudden preservation on the very verge of destruction brings with it, the lingering emotions of recent terror tempering the joy of immediate delivery. It is amidst such scenes as Coradun and Alt-bo present, where

“No vernal blooms the torpid rock array,
But meteors glare, and stormy glooms invest,”

that descriptive genius might select her grandest images of sublimity. In such a scene, the soaring genius of a Shakespeare, a Salvator, or an Ossian, might repose his soaring wing, and find his wildest visions realized.

Our return from the shrine of our interesting pilgrimage was marked by as many "hair-breadth scapes," and "moving accidents," as crossing the wildest heaths and most desolate rocks, amidst the sombre gloom of a dark stormy autumnal evening, could bring with it.—While the roar of Coradun was still murmuring on our ears, we lost our path; but fortunately met a poor peasant returning to his hut in the neighbouring mountains, and who, instead of answering our questions, insisted on turning back with us, and was indeed our voluntary guide for near two miles, which he had of course to traverse over again on his way home.

Before we caught a view of the cliffs, the shadows of evening were thickening

into night; and notwithstanding the drizzling of the rain, and keen sea-breeze that chilled the air, we found the courteous "sons of the wave" to whom we had intrusted our horses, watching with solicitude and impatience for our return.

SKETCH XVI.

.....

WHATEVER hardships the Irish peasant submits to during the week, it can never be said that "*Sunday shines no sabbath-day to him.*" Apparently endowed with the singular faculty of being periodically happy, the hallowed day brings with it to him, a temporary oblivion of every care, and the transient possession of every enjoyment, which his fancy, little schooled in pleasurable speculation, can devise. Early on a Sunday morning a cabin, cleaner than usual, exhibits at its door a groupe very different in appearance from that it sheltered the preceding day. The lower Irish, passionately fond of dress, and without the means of gratifying their dominant pas-

sion, confine their wishes to the hard-earned suit which the mass-house, or dance on Sunday, or the fair of their market-town, affords an opportunity of displaying. Thus the scanty drapery of wretchedness is exchanged, not only for the garb of comfort, but of ostentation; and it is not unusual to behold even ornamental finery on those on Sunday, who during the rest of the week were worse clothed than the poorest mendicant in England. It is remarked by Buffon, that "a man's character passes in some degree into his dress; and that we are led to suppose what kind a man he is, by the kind of dress he wears." This is in some degree illustrated by the weekly metamorphosis of the Irish peasant; for he seems to throw off, with his wretched "customary suit," the gloom of countenance which accompanied it, and the national cheeriness of his character then shines in every lineament of his face.

On a Sunday the young women go in groupes to the mass-house, generally

dressed in white gowns and coloured petticoats ; with their rug cloaks hanging on one arm, and their shoes and stockings on the other. When they approach the chapel they bathe their feet in the first stream, and assume those articles of luxury which are never drawn on but for shew, and the public gaze of the parish. After prayers both sexes, and of all ages, generally adjourn to the fields, to witness a hurling* match, or some of

* A barony, and even sometimes a county, will *hurl* against another. The respective parties are drawn up like two little armies, and distinguished from each other by their colours. Their goals are generally placed about 200 yards distant : they are guarded by two sentinels called in Irish *coolbara*, while the active parties are termed *tridak*, which I believe means on the alert. "The might that slumbers in a peasant's arm" is by them roused to an incredible exertion ; and the address, spirit, and dexterity, displayed during the game, are truly wonderful. Wrestling-matches are also extremely frequent, and generally performed with singular skill and adroitness.

those manly sports to which the lower Irish are so passionately addicted. One of them, the *cathu-clogh*, or "flinging of the stone," is precisely the same with the ancient Greek pastime of the *discus*. The candidate who pants for the fame of those

"Virtues that are placed in nerve and bone,"

takes a stone of immense weight in his right hand, inclines his body a little forward, advances one leg, poises his arm, and after two or three balancing motions, flings it from him to a considerable distance. These national amusements are not confined to the peasantry, the young gentlemen of the adjoining counties frequently engage in them. As in the gymnastic festivals of ancient Greece, men of the highest rank, and most refined education, appear as candidates for the prize of personal strength or personal activity. Thus even the amusements among the lower Irish are calculated to strengthen their frames, and to inure them in supporting the greatest

burthens and the greatest fatigue. While the English peasant employs the hour succeeding to his attendance at church, in the perusal of some religious tract, the Irish peasant devotes himself to an exercise which may render him a less pious, but certainly forms him to be a more serviceable member of the community.

Although the fare of Sunday seldom rises beyond the accustomed 'potatoes and milk of the rest of the week ; some few halfpence are always spared from the household purse to purchase the pleasures which the Sunday cake bestows.— In the centre of a field near some *petit auberge*, a distaff is fixed in the earth, on which is placed a large flat cake: this cake is the signal of pleasure, and becomes the reward of talent. The young and old of both sexes, for miles round the neighbourhood, hasten to enjoy the pleasures of the cake, which is sometimes carried off by the best dancer, and sometimes by the archest wag of the company. At a little distance from this standard of revelry, is placed its chief agent

the piper, who is always seated on the ground with a hole dug near him, into which the contributions of the assembly are dropt: the manner of bestowing these donations is attended with a little gallantry not to be passed over in silence. At the end of every jig, the piper is paid by the young man who dances it, and who endeavours to enhance the value of the gift, by first bestowing it on his fair partner, and though a penny a jig is esteemed very good pay, yet the gallantry or ostentation of the contributor, anxious at once to appear generous in the eyes of his mistress, or to outstep the liberality of his rivals, sometimes trebles the sum which the piper usually receives. I have been at some of these cakes, and have invariably observed the inordinate passion for dancing, so prevalent among the Irish peasants. It is indeed very rare to find an individual among them who was not for some time under the tuition of a dancing master.* Thus passes a-

* It is however necessary to observe that the profession of this elegant art, by no means prohibits the adoption of any other: a friend of

way the Sabbath of an Irish peasant, the first hours of the day are devoted to religion, the rest to the enjoyment of such pleasures as lie within the limited scope of his acquisition. Sometimes led by the light of nature, sometimes restrained by the shades of prejudice, alternately governed by truth and error, his conduct is only to be judged by the circumstances under which he is reared. The rigid principles of Calvinistical faith, the strict observances of Lutheran piety, may condemn his festal mode of passing that day peculiarly devoted to the Being who made it the sacred season of his own repose ; but whether the happy overflowings of a cheerful humble heart, blest and blessing in the short sweet season of its transient felicity, or the sombre meditation of sys-

mine having sent for a carman a few days back to convey some furniture to a neighbouring town, he excused himself, saying that " he was a dancing-master by trade, as well as a carman, and that his pupils were so numerous just then, he could not possibly absent himself from them.

tematic piety, periodically indulged, according to the letter of the law, is the incense that "smells sweetest to heaven," it is for him alone to judge "to whom all hearts are known."

SKETCH XVII.

.....

TO those who are Epicureans in weather, whose pleasures are in some degree subject to "every skiey influence," the refreshing sweetness of the air after a transient shower is the first of atmospheric enjoyments; and in the confidence of a promise offered to us by a brilliant rainbow, we set out on one of the pleasantest rambles we had hitherto enjoyed. Directing our steps to the foot of the *or-mountains*, we crossed a dismantled arch rudely thrown over a stream which flowed from their summit, and whose source became the object of our pursuit. As we descended the mountain's brow, a little vally gradually opened between its steep acclivities, which still ascending

with the elevation of the mountains, was still embosomed by its irregular and overhanging projections, while the streams which serpented through it, seemed to expand as we proceeded along its banks, sometimes dashing wildly over those pieces of rock it had torn away in its steep descent, sometimes stealing its thin pellucid wave over broad flags of marble which shone brightly to the transient sunbeam, and sometimes falling unimpeded from a lofty and perpendicular steep, while from the white foam beneath arose a feathery spray which dropt in dewy showers on the aquatic plants with which its shores were enriched. We frequently paused in the course of our ramble from the weariness of the continued ascent ; but more frequently to contemplate such scenes as included within a coup-d'œil, much of the beautiful and sublime of picturesque creation. The boundless ocean, the Alpine rock, the dreary heath, the luxurious vale, and many landscape traits incongruous to each other, seemed here happily united in one

harmonious combination ; while many a ruin which time had "mouldered into beauty," many a hut which necessity had hung upon the virid point of some tall cliff, charmed the fairy gaze of fancy, and awakened in the musing mind a train of associated ideas which shed an extraneous interest over every object on which the eye reposed. While I beheld these beautiful scenes, so numerous in my native country, so frequently concealed in those remote places which national observation has never visited, and to which foreign curiosity has never been pointed ; imagination eagerly glided over those times of anarchy and warfare, when the waste and desolated land smoked with the vital stream of her sons, to that felicitous period, when the candid Bede describes it as another Canaan, flowing with milk and honey ; and when even Cambreus, borne away by the beauty and fertility of its aspect, describes it as a country whose verdant hills were covered with innumerable flocks, whose plains waved with golden corn, and whose ancient forests were filled with

wild beasts. Such it was when the Cambrian topographer landed on its green and smiling shores among the first of its British invaders*.

Notwithstanding the rough acclivities of which these mountains are composed, we found them cultivated to their summits, in detached places; and as we were climbing up an almost inaccessible steep, we overtook a poor peasant who was literally not driving but pushing a poor lean horse up before him, laden with panniers filled with manure, with which he was going to enrich a future potatoe

* Even Morryson, the most prejudiced and abject of the many scribblers, who in the Elizabethian day, endeavoured to write themselves into the favour of the English government by calumniating the natural as well as the moral state of Ireland, even while he upbraids the natives for their negligence of agriculture, is inadvertently led into a description of the beauty and fertility of a part of the country and involuntarily extols the disposition of the Irish to tillage and their large exportation of corn.

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ridge, obtained for a low rent on the summit of the mountain ; thus, by unexampled industry and unwaried labour, endeavouring to

“ Force a churlish soil for scanty bread.”

Before we lost sight of him, he had actually taken one of the panniers off the wretched animal's back, and was carrying it on his own.*

* A cultivation so constantly formed on the summits of the highest mountains in Ireland, proves that native taste for agriculture, which to the modern Irish has been so unjustly denied, and of which the ancient left such irrefragable proofs. Mr. Mollineux in his letter to the archbishop of Dublin, supposes Ireland to have been more populous in former times, merely from the remains which it still exhibits of agriculture : “ mountains, says, he, that are now covered with bogs, have been formerly ploughed, for when dug five or six feet high a proper soil for vegetation is discovered, and an appearance of furrows and ridges is still visible :

While necessitous industry, without the cheering stimulus of a competent reward, thus toils laboriously up the "heights precipitous," and steals a scan-

he adds, that a plough and a hedge-row were found under a bog six feet deep in the county of Donegal, and that he had himself seen the stump of a large tree in a bog ten feet deep at Castle Forbes. It is well known that in the wildest and most uncultivated parts of the county of Cork, the vestages of high roads cut through the mountains are still visible, and that while modern Ireland is reproached for the scantiness of her plantations, her luxurious woods in former times supplied England with the timber of which many of the noblest of her religious edifices are constructed: the churches of Gloucester, Westminster, and several others, are covered *with Irish oak*. All that remained of the Irish woods were cut down during the reigns of William and Anne, and sent to Holland for the purpose of ship-building, Irish oak being even then deemed the best in Europe. I believe it was some time antecedent to that period, that the famous wood of *shilelah* in the county of Wicklow lost its growth of timber. "Countries," says Montesquieu, "are not cul-

ty subsistence from that rugged soil least favoured by the genial eye of nature, indolence, as a national defect, cannot be attributed to the Irish character.* Perhaps indeed the same cheeriness of exertion is not to be found in the Irish labourer as animates the efforts of the English husbandman. But surely the eagerness with which the English farmer seizes on the poor peasant emigrant of Ireland, is

tivated in proportion to their fertility, but to their liberty ; and the vestiges of ancient agriculture which are still discoverable in Ireland, give no faint proof of the civil liberty she enjoyed."

* I have been repeatedly assured by persons of undoubted veracity, that it is usual to let the least fertile parts of the mountains to the peasantry, at a low rent ; from whom, after they have by the greatest labour improved their soil, it is reclaimed, and relet at a higher rent to some more wealthy tenant : mean time the original cultivator takes another barren tract, and continues to use the same exertions to the same effect.

a correlative proof of that superiority of manual strength*, that wondrous capability of exertion, and that ready inclination for employment, which characterize the poor adventurer, whose merit in this instance is seldom justly estimated in his own country, and never adequately rewarded. "Nature is just to all mankind, and repays them for their industry : she renders them industrious by annexing rewards in proportion to their labour ; but if an arbitrary prince should attempt to deprive people of nature's bounty, they would fall into a disrelish of industry, and then indolence and inaction must be their only happiness:" and by whatever means the bounteous intentions of nature are counteracted, the efforts must be the same.

The character of a nation, so far as it is uninfluenced by climate, must in a great degree be the result of the policy.

* "Both the body and mind of the Irish," says Davis, "are indued with extraordinary abilities of nature."

by which it is governed. “La science de la morale, says Helvetius, n’est autre chose que la science même de législation.”—Admitting, therefore, that the indolence of the Irish has become a national vice, it certainly cannot be traced to a national source ; the liberal minister of Elizabeth, reluctantly acceding to the fact, endeavours, and with success, to trace it to the extortion of *coin and livery*, an extortion under which the Irish smarted for centuries, “and which,” says Davis, “produced *two notorious effects*, for it made the lands waste, and the people idle ; for when the husbandman had laboured all the year, the soldier consumed in one night all the fruits of that labour.” Among a people who for more than four centuries suffered the most galling hardships that warfare and civil dissension could inflict, who, as an English minister expresses it, “were beaten as in a mortar by pestilence and famine,” many bad habits must have insinuated themselves, which time, good policy, and undeniable causes of popular contentment, could alone undermine or des-

troy ;* and indeed a knowledge of Irish history is sufficient to convince the most prejudiced mind, that most of the vices which have been attributed to the character of the lower Irish, are to be traced to an early political cause. Thus the same injustice that operated as a check on the ardour of Irish industry, broke

* “ Qu’ont produit, jusqu’aujourd’hui les plus belles maximes de morales ? Elles ont corrigé quelques particuliers des défauts que peut-être ils se reprochaient d’ailleurs : elles n’ont produit aucun changement dans les mœurs des nations. Quelle en est la cause ? C’est que les vices d’un peuple sont, si j’ose le dire, toujours cachés au fond de sa législation ; c’est là qu’il fut fouiller, pour arracher la racine productrice de ses vices.” Helvetius.—“ What has ever been accomplished by all the fine maxims of morality ? They may have corrected some faults, of which individuals were conscious in their conduct ; but they have produced no amendment in the characters of nations. And the cause of this is, that the vices of a people are always rooted in its legislative code, where we must search in order to eradicate them.”

the tie of national love, and drove the suffering native of Ireland a mendicant into foreign lands*, awakened in those who preferred a struggling penury at home, to confident indigence abroad, that vigilant quickness of apprehension, which prejudiced aversion construed into craft.

As we had now reached the spring of the mountain-torrent, whose devious course had already seduced us far beyond the general limits of our rambles, we began to descend by a winding path, which led to a little village on the skirts of the mountain's brow. The intelligence of our approach had preceded our arrival by some minutes, and two of the villagers who had been in dispute about a stream of water, which the one had diverted

* "So, says Sir J. Davis, that the lower Irish chose to be beggars in foreign countries rather than labour in their own fruitful land at home." "And a brave people, asserts Burke, "will prefer liberty accompanied by virtuous poverty, to a depraved and wealthy servitude." *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

from supplying the mill of the other, came to submit their dispute to Mr. ***, and to abide by his arbitration. A people who are always thus ready to apply to magisterial influence, cannot so much be supposed a litigious people, as to act from a sense of equity that renders them ever alive to the least appearance of imposition.

An Irish peasant who thinks himself aggrieved or injured, will go any distance, and encounter every obstacle, to obtain retribution, or, as he expresses it, to get law ; but whatever may be the destiny of his suit, or whatever verdict the magistrate pronounces, even though destructive to his hopes, and inimical to his interest, if he can at all reconcile it to his understanding, he submits without a murmur.*

* Being on a visit a few weeks back at the house of a leading magistrate, and rising earlier one morning than usual, I beheld from my window two groupes of peasants leaning at a little distance from each other ; and though it

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Fierce in their native hardihood of soul,
True to imagined right, above controul,
While thus the peasant boasts his right to scan,
He learns to venerate himself as man.

The Irish have probably borrowed this keen sense of justice and profound submission to judicial authority, from the rigid severity of their ancient Brehon laws. When Sir E. Pelham and Sir J. Davis went as the first justices of assize into the counties of Tyrconnel and Tyrone, they observed, that though their com-

was excessively cold and rained heavily, they remained in this exposed and comfortless situation from seven till ten. When my host descended from his bed-room and gave audience to his shivering clients, who had come for law, the question to be decided was of a very equivocal nature, and I imagine it required all the subtlety of the law to ascertain to an exactitude which was the party aggrieved; an immediate judgment was however pronounced, and the litigants departed amicably together, equally submissive to the decree of magisterial umpire, though certainly not with equal cause for satisfaction.

mission was somewhat distasteful to the Irish lords, "yet that it was most sweet and welcome to the common people: for they quickly apprehended the difference between the tyranny and oppression under which they lived before, and the first government and protection which was promised them in time to come:" and surely this amenability to magisterial influence, this subordination to the voice of superior rank and official power, argue little of that lawless and intractable disposition so generally ascribed to the character of the Irish peasantry.

They indeed not only entertain a strong and almost intuitive idea of jurisprudence, but are warmly attached to the formulæ of such little laws as their sense of right and wrong, and wish of mutual preservation, have induced them to establish among themselves.*

* To borrow salt and not to repay it, even to the last grain, is deemed a fatal infringement of this social code; and I understadd that even the first organization of the Thrashers was

marked by the promulgation of certain sumptuary laws, by which they endeavoured to restrain the licentious innovations admitted into the costume of their compatriots, by the influence of rustic vanity, or the contagion of superior example. One of their manifestoes fixed on the door of a chapel, interdicted the use of shoes in favour of *brogues*, except to such as did not speak Irish, they being considered equally unworthy the national character and national dress. The Irish *kerchiff* and *binogue* were also to be worn, on the penalty of having any more modern covering taken from the wearer.

SKETCH XVIII.

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MY rambles and frequent conversations with the peasantry in the neighbourhood of L*** house have obtained me a degree of rustic notoriety, to which I stand indebted for a visit from Mr. Thady O'Conolan, a schoolmaster in the neighbourhood, and a personage not only highly esteemed by his rural disciples, but looked up to by his less intelligent neighbours, as a prodigy of learning, erudition, and genius. He introduced himself, by saying : " he had heard I was fond of Irish composition, and that he had waited on me to mention he had some of the poems of Ossian, which were much at my service. The Irish," he added with a brogue that beggars all concepti-

s

on; "the Irish is the finest and loftiest tongue in the world: the English can never come near it, and the Greek alone is worthy of being compared to it." He then with great enthusiasm repeated the description of Fion's shield in Irish, and Homer's description of that of Achilles, giving, with great exultation, the preference to the former; as he did to Ossian's account of his father's hounds, over the dogs of Ovid: and then with the utmost gravity declared his intention of translating the Eneid, and some of Terence's plays, into Irish. "The latter, he continued, I will teach to my scholars, who may play it yet upon one of the great London stages to admiration."

When I complimented him on the extent of his erudition, and expressed my astonishment at his having acquired it in so remote a situation, he replied: "Young lady, I went far and near for it, as many a poor scholar did before me: for I could construe Homer before I ever put on shoe or stocking, aye, or a hat either, which

to be sure I never did till I was twenty years of age." He then at my request gave me a sketch of his peripatetic studies. When he was a young man, he said, there were but few schools in Connaught, and those few but bad: and that it was not unusual for eight or ten boys "*who had the love of learning strong upon them,*" to set off bare-footed and bare-headed to Munster, where the best schools were then held; that they commenced their philosophic pilgrimage poor and friendless; but that they begged their way, and that the name of *poor scholar* procured them every where friends and subsistence; that having heard much of the celebrity of a school-master in the county of Clare, he and his adventurous companions directed their steps towards his seminary; "but," added Thady "it being a grazing country, and of course no hospitality to be found there, meaning that it was thinly inhabited, we could not get a spot to shelter our heads in the neighbourhood of the school; so being a tight set of Connaught boys, able and strong, we carried off the school-master

one fine night, and never stopped till we landed him on the other side of the Shannon, when a priest gave us a chapel-house, and so we got learning and hospitality to boot, and the school-master made a great fortune in time, all Connaught flocking to him, and now here I am at the head of a fine seminary myself." He then informed me that he had fifty pupils; that the head class were in Homer, and did not pay for their tuition, as they assisted him to teach the rest; that all boys of the name of O'Conolan were also taught gratis, and the rest paid according to the means of their parents, from one shilling to four a quarter: he added that he had then five female élèves, "to whom, said he, I am teaching philosophy, the humanities and mathematics, to give them a genteel idea of becoming tutoresses in gentlemen's families." After some further conversation, Mr. Thady O'Conolan departed, but not without a promise of our visiting his academy the following day.

The lyceum of this Connaught sage, is a miserable cabin on the side of a very desolate wood. The sound of our horses' feet brought a number of his young disciples to the door, clad in a drapery light and frugal as philosophy herself could dictate; for neither the Greek sandal, the Roman perones, nor the Irish brogue, secured their naked feet from the damp earthen floor of the academy. The next moment Thady himself appeared in all the majesty of pedagogue power: his hair, dress, and manner, were all admirable, and left the Lingo and O'Sullivan of O'Keefe far behind; his low clumsy figure, clerical tonsure, rubicund face; his wrapping coat, according to the old Irish costume, fastened with a skewer, the sleeves unoccupied, and the collar of his shirt thrown open; combined with his Greek and Latin quotations, his rich brogue, and affected dignity, to render him a finished character. Having reprimanded his pupils for their want of good manners, he welcomed us with a look and air that

seemed to convince us, as well as them, that their dereliction from decorum proceeded not from any deficiency of precept or example on the part of their master. He then apologized for the absence of his first class, who, he said, he intended should have construed some of Homer for us ; but that they had gone to cut turf for a poor distressed family in the neighbourhood, and that for that day the Trojan plains were resigned for the bog. "It was but the other day, said he, they built up that cabin yonder, for a poor old widow, and I gave them a holiday for it and my blessing into the bargain."

The interior of Thady's cabin perfectly corresponded with its external aspect. It was divided into two apartments, which boasted no other furniture than an old deal table covered with copy-books and slates, and a few boards placed on stones which served as seats to the young students, some of whom were poring over the "*Seven wise Masters of Greece*."

others, vainly held a Cordery, while their eyes were fixed on the visitors; and three tall fellows were endeavouring to read all at the same time out of an old tattered volume of Virgil. "There, said Thady pointing to the inward room, there is my *sanctum sanctorum*: there I teach Homer, philosophy and the mathematics:" and taking down an old book, which had sympathized in the destiny of Virgil, he exclaimed: "This is the only Homer I have; and though seven boys read out of it daily, it never causes a moment's dispute: whereas, if I had two young gentlemen studying in it, my Homer would be a bone of contention to them from morning till night." Indeed Thady endeavoured continually to impress us with an idea of the subordination and civilized manners of his scholars, and we saw nothing that in the least degree contradicted his assertions; he assured us that the labourer who earned but sixpence a day, would sooner live upon potatoes and salt, than refuse a little learning to his child. "I have," said

he, "above twenty boys who are come from distant parts to me, who begged their way, and are now maintained among the poor of the neighbourhood, who, far from considering them a burthen, were so eager to have them, that to avoid jealousy, I was obliged to have lots drawn for them; the boys indeed are grateful, and make the best returns they can by working early and late for their patrons when not engaged with me."— Having procured a holiday for his pupils, we now took leave of Thady; and if to be a school-master, it is "requisite to be more or less than man," as Le Sage declares, Thady certainly conceived himself the former, as he detailed the merits of his seminary, and the classic progress of his disciples.

The passionate love of letters discovered by the native Irish in all ages, it would indeed be obstinate scepticism to deny; since even the host of enemies which Ireland has had to contend with, never dare deny her supremacy in learning; and how so ardent a love for all

that softens and humanizes the natural state of man can be reconciled with a ferocious and savage barbarity of national character, is a paradox not easily comprehended. Sir John Davis, who was attorney general in Ireland, when a series of civil wars had reduced it to an almost barbarous state, compared to that in which it was found by the English barons in the reign of Henry the Second, declares, "that the Irish were even then, amidst an unceasing anxiety for their lives and property, which were always threatened and never secure, still lovers of music, poetry, and all kind of learning ;" and indeed no stronger testimony* of their ancient civilization could be pro-

* Allemande, in his *Histoire d'Irlande*, asserts that it was enough to be an Irishman, or even to have studied in Ireland, to become the founder of a religious seminary in any part of Europe. "When Gothic ignorance expelled all learning and science from the continent," says an elegant writer, "they fell into the protection of the Hynialls until a war with strangers altered the face of things in Ireland."

duced than that which still exists in the love of learning discoverable among the most neglected and despised of their posterity. Doctor Johnson, in lamenting that doctor Leland began his History from too late a date, adds: "the ages which deserve a strict inquiry, are those times, for such there have been, when Ireland was the school of the West." Learning in Ireland has indeed had much to encounter both from foreign and domestic enemies. The first blow it received was during the first Danish invasion, when the savage Turgicus with a political barbarity burnt all the books he could discover, and razed the colleges to the ground; while the bard, resigning his charming art with that liberty which had been his inspiration and his theme, fled from the usurped castle of his patron, or escaped from the ruins of the hallowed sanctuary of his order, and with his harp unstrung and his voice broken and tremulous, sought a refuge in the labyrinth of the cavern or the gloom of the wood, refusing like the enslaved Israelite to breathe on the ear of his coun-

try's foe a "melody in heaviness." Yet how few are there now to be found, who, like the bard of Erin or of Israel, exclaim: "when I forget thee, my country, may my right hand forget her cunning!"

On our return from Thady's, a tall well-looking young man with a satchel on his back, ran for a considerable way beside the carriage, until perceiving that we observed him, he said he had taken the liberty to follow us, to beg we would give him an old Cicero; as we had distributed several old books among Thady's pupils, not one of which had fallen to his lot. We asked him what profession he was intended for: he said he had been studying for Apothecaries' Hall, but that of late he had taken to Philosophy. The philosopher was barefooted, and though it was raining, ran beside the carriage with an uncovered head.

SKETCH XIX.

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THE incessant rain of a morning, sultry for the advanced season, was the precursor of one of the finest evenings I ever beheld. The clouds discharged of their heaviness rose in fleecy columns from the sides of the surrounding mountains. The setting sun unobscured by a single vapour, with all his blushing honours thick about him, sunk in the waves of the "steep Atlantic;" and the large lingering drops of the recent showers hung like brilliant gems on the foliage of the trees, whose leaves were imbued with the mellow colouring of autumn's last tints. The air, calm and still, breathed odours; and a shot fired from an American vessel as it cleared the bar, was

the only sound that disturbed the soft solemnity of the hour. Such was the evening in which my last ramble amidst the romantic wilds of Tyreragh was taken.

I had not wandered far from L*** house, when I was overtaken by a young peasant who was driving a mule laden with two panniers. As soon as he had approached us, I received the usual benediction and salute ; and the voluntary information that he was going to Sligo, for some grains for a sick cow, not being able, he said, to procure any at Ballina, whence had just come, as Ballina and its neighbourhood had been the head-quarters of the Thrashers. I made some inquiries relative to their operations. " Why, replied he, they are busy enough at present with the tythe-proctors ; and they have barred a priest out of his chapel, in the hope of making him lower his dues, threatening to go to church if he does not, not being able to pay both priest and minister, since the proctors have raised the tythes and the

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priest his dues. For my own part, church or mass is all the same to me."— After some further conversation, my e-leemosynary companion passed on.

The apparent indifference of this young peasant, who was probably the oracle of his countrymen, to any peculiar form of worship, confirmed me in an opinion, which from reiterated experience I had long entertained; that the peasantry of Ireland were not naturally so bigoted a people as was generally supposed; and that they were rather coalesced in opinion and sentiment, and attached to a certain class in political establishment, than jealously united as the professors of any particular sect in religion.

Does the unfortunate whom necessity leads, or the traveller whom mischance conducts, to their huts, find his religion a subject of inquiry before he receives the rites of hospitality, so cordially, so indiscriminately bestowed? Does the

protestant gentleman find himself less faithfully, less actively served than the catholic, or does a difference of faith influence the social affections of their hearts, or chill the ardour of their attachment to those who treat them with justice and humanity? Oh! no; the line of demarcation which severs the lower from the higher orders of the Irish nation has not been traced by the finger of bigotry: it is drawn by poverty and discontent; it is to be defaced by benevolence and good policy.

However principles of patriotism may be influenced by a romantic ardour of imagination; however the *amor patriæ* of youthful feelings may revel in the speculation of a native Utopia; however the enthusiasm of national affection may ideally overleap the rational boundary of reason and possibility; it is not easy to believe that even the most visionary mind, animated by the most patriotic sentiments, would be so chimerical in its hopes or so wild in its desires, as to anticipate

or suppose the revival of those original rights forfeited by the influence of the (now far distant) events to which all nations are subject, and lost in the sweep of ages gone by "with those beyond the Flood;" or speculate on the annihilation of those existing establishments, sanctioned by time, by succession, by all that guards the privileges and claims of society, and all that secures the property and possessions of the individual. But though I would not assert, and do not believe, that "the succession of those who cultivate the soil is the true pedigree of property;" yet while in those who do cultivate it I behold the rude traces of the happiest nature, struggling against the hardships of the severest destiny; while local oppression and hopeless indigence impel them to desperate revolt, or lure them to daring innovation; it is surely to be wished that those causes, which through a series of ages have produced such fatal, such invariable effects, were at least softened, if not effectually eradicated.*

It is indeed asserted by some Irishmen, that there is no excuse for the errors of their unhappy countrymen, because there is no cause for that murmuring spirit of discontent so long apparent in their conduct ; and though this doctrine of effect without causes may be supported by some logicians, who assert that their actual separation implies neither absurdity nor contradiction, yet to one whose heart has long sorrowed over national affliction,

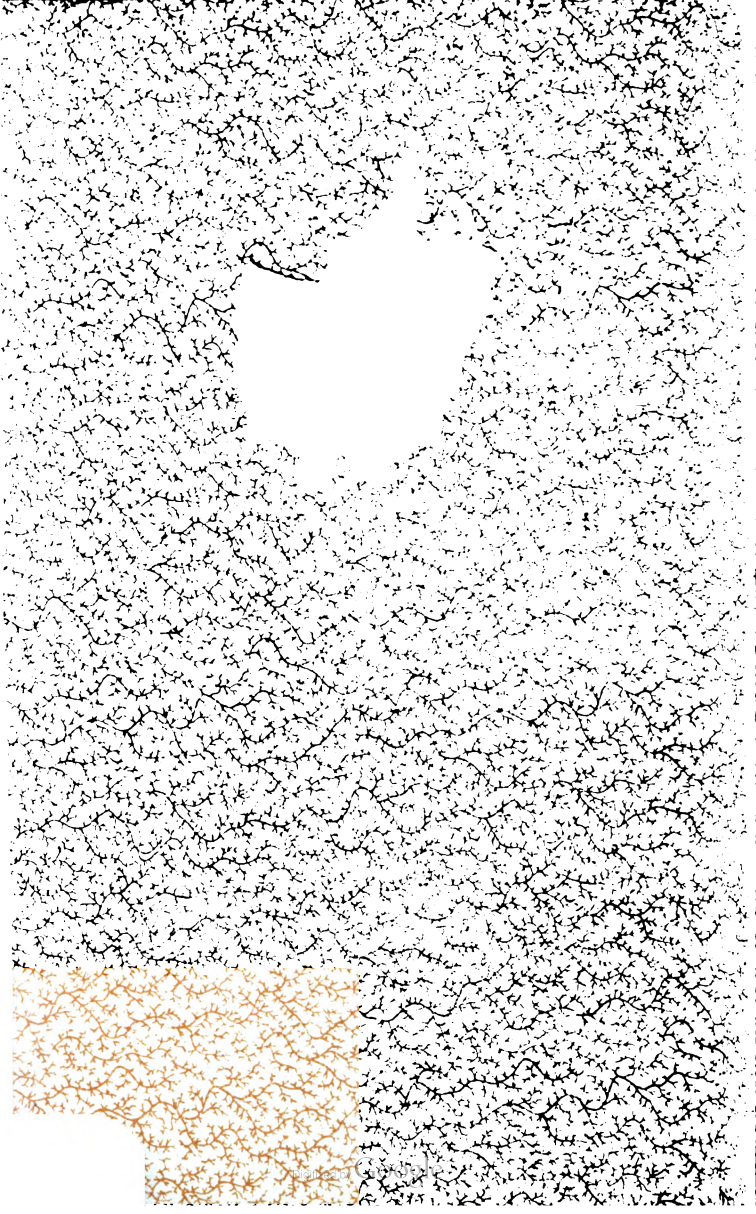
* “ If civil society be made for the advantage of man, all the advantages for which it is made become his right : it is an institution of beneficence ; and law itself is but beneficence acting by rule. Men have a right to live by that rule : they have a right to justice as between their fellows, whether their fellows are in politic functions, or in ordinary occupation ; they have a right to the fruits of their industry, and to the means of making their industry fruitful ; they have a right to the acquisition of their parents, to the nourishment and improvement of their offspring, to instruction in life, and to consolation in death.”—Burke’s Reflections on the Revolution in France.

and whose head is little skilled in logical subtilities, it implies both.

The light of truth guides us by the simplest path to the source of national misery or national vice ; it is with her we trace them to natural or to moral causes, to the fatality of climate or to the errors of legislation. It is by her pure beam we discover whether the distractions in which nations are so frequently involved, are the physical results of feverish constitutions and maniac brains ; or the moral effects of that impulsive principle in human nature, which sooner or later inevitably opposes itself to the infringements of those rights which hold their sacred charter from the voice of nature's God.

THE END.

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